

SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs

"People don't like to know what the boring answer would be. People like to know fantasy stuff. People like to think there could be things out there,...."

Mitch Stanley interviewed in 2007

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Warmer weather = More UFO reports!

With the passage of March 13th, we were treated with the usual "Arizona UFOs" hype on the web. As always, most of it was tainted with biased points of view. Therefore, I spent some of the issue trying to explain the case and what the likely solutions are. As with last issue, "Psycho clown" provided us with some artwork for this piece! I hope the readers will find the article informative.

Frequent contributor, Matt Graeber informs me that his vision (which is pretty poor these days) has been getting worse. Despite this, Matt keeps pumping out articles and I now have a backlog for the next few issues. Hopefully, his vision will not be completely lost.

On March 6th, Dave Thomas informed me that Professor Charles Moore passed away. Moore was part of the NYU team that launched various balloon configurations out of Alamogordo in 1947 in conjunction with Project MOGUL. One of these balloon flights is considered the source for the Foster Ranch debris, which sparked the Roswell incident. I only had brief contact with the man years ago (thanks to Robert Todd). When I started discussing those that accused him of fudging numbers and making up flight

paths, he basically ignored the question and chose not to answer it. By that time, he had become frustrated with the Roswell story. He seemed to think proponents were not interested in a scientific discussion on that matter and were more into reinforcing their beliefs. Dave Thomas has a good article about Professor Moore on page 5.

There was plenty of UFO activity being reported by MUFON. I guess it has something to do with the weather warming up. I would like to suggest to my fellow amateur astronomers, who read this newsletter and like to file UFO reports, that they at least learn how to give an accurate report. Date, time location, azimuth, elevation angles, angular size and speed are valuable measurements. Anything else is essentially worthless. Stop embarrassing yourselves by making bad reports.

The events around Euclid, Ohio demonstrated, once again, that imagination can transform mundane lights into something exotic. The efforts of the MUFON investigator in the Euclid case indicates that some of them know how to do their jobs. It is too bad that this is not the case in all UFO investigations.

Finally, Anthony Bragalia continues to e-mail me with more exotic claims. I gave up responding since he seems to distort just about everything I write. However, he made one comment that made me smile. He suggested I argued against his Roswell investigations simply because I secretly believed he was right. I responded with a simple "ROTFLMAO" ("Roll on the floor laughing my A** off"), for which he took offense. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. To change my opinion would require something more substantial than rumor, innuendo, and wild second hand stories. His latest argument about Alcoholism seems to indicate that only Alien bodies can cause people to be addicted to Alcohol (See the Roswell corner).

NOTE: Due to family commitments, the next issue of SUNlite will be delayed until Mid-July.

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Cover: I took a photograph of the sky from NH as it was around 8PM on March 13, 1997. I then put in my version of what I think the Arizona UFOs appeared like to many observers in Phoenix that evening over several minutes.

Left: I recorded a UFO on March 20, during the Pleiades Occultation. There were no satellites listed on Heaven's above but further research revealed it to be the fainter IRAS. It was not listed because of its magnitude. My UFO turned into an IFO. (see p 28)



Hardly had SUNlite 2-2 been released when the UFO examiner presented a whole slew of UFO reports. Several caught my eye.

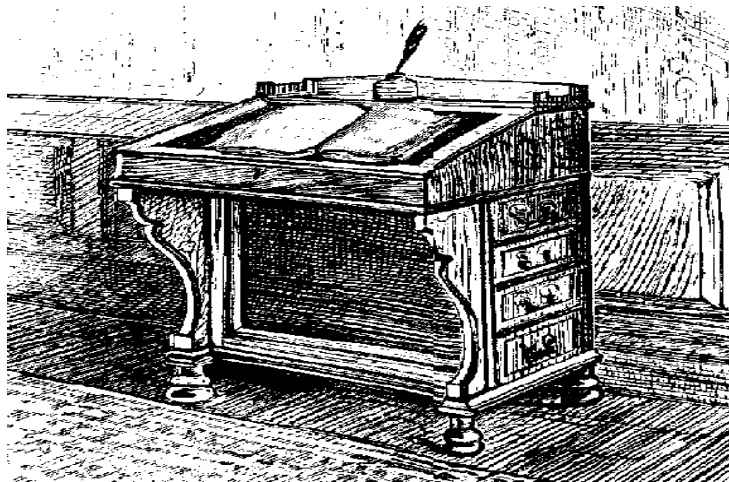
The first was a sighting in Milford NH, not far from my home. This happened on September 26, 2009. Two "pilots" saw an object in the sky that was, they estimated, at an altitude of 70-80,000 feet! It is virtually impossible to estimate distance or altitude of an unknown object without knowing its size. If it were visible at an altitude of 70,000 feet it must have been really big! Additionally, the weather would have to have been exceptionally clear! These "pilots" also stated it was circular in shape (from 70-80,000 feet?). It was there for about 30-40 minutes and then disappeared so rapidly to the northeast that it appeared to "vanish". Perhaps it was just a weather balloon. The values of speed and distance do not sound very credible.

It seems like Oklahoma amateur astronomers continue to report UFOs to MUFON! This one was puzzling as it involved lights flickering on an off low in the eastern sky near Fort Smith, Arkansas. Another observer 22 miles to the south also saw these lights in the same general direction. The long base-line of 22 miles with the same general direction indicates the lights were very far away. About fifty miles east of Fort Smith, is the Shirley Military Operations Area (MOA). I wonder if they were busy that night dropping flares?

Another "amateur astronomer" report involved somebody who was going to be star watching in Georgia on the 21st of March. All we got was the date and the UFO went from NW to SE. He mentioned that the UFO had spikes/protrusions but people have made those kinds of observations for planets and stars. Based on the lack of important details, I would consider their level of experience in astronomy at the "novice" level. It is interesting that the International Space Station (ISS) made a pass around 20:30 from NW to SE over the state of Georgia that evening. Could this have been the UFO? I kept waiting for an update on the Georgia MUFON web site or the UFO examiner's blog but it never

Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



happened. I guess nobody cared to report that it was probably the ISS.

Another Georgia UFO appeared to be Venus. The individual stated the object was in the west much brighter than Sirius. No times were given but it looked like a bright star or planet he was recording. Once the camera was placed on a tripod, the object exhibited, what appeared to be, diurnal motion over the time of the recording. This reinforces the idea that it was astronomical. My guess is that it was probably Venus or some other bright star. One can not be sure since the observer's report lacked the usual important details.

Then there was the traveling salesman (this not an old joke), who watched UFOs for an hour at somebody's home. These sounded very much like scintillating stars to me since he reports they show up every night!

There were multiple reports from Dublin, Abilene, and Breckenridge, Texas. All point towards the same general area southwest of Stephenville and involved seeing jet activity. Do you think it is possible the military was conducting air operations involving aerial flares in the Brownwood MOA again?

An early April sighting came from Youngstown, Ohio by a "sky watcher" and "UFO researcher". It included videos of some flashing strobe lights. They looked like the strobe lights one would expect on the wings of an airplane. Apparently, the appearance of hovering over the trees for a few minutes made her think it could not be an airplane. Of course, any object that

is heading in your direction from a distance, will appear to hover for a while until it gets close. The "researcher" also expressed fear over the lights. When it passed overhead, it made the sound of an airplane and the videographer noted this. According to her, the UFO appeared to be attempting to mimic an airplane in sound! Watch the clip. She actually states words to this effect at time 4:50! Ahhh...the power of belief. She "knew what she saw"!

The UFO examiner presents a lot of photographs in low resolution, which makes them hard to evaluate. The one from Loudon, TN was easy though. As often is the case, the witness did not see the UFOs when the photograph was taken. It is my opinion, the person took the photographs through their window and caught the reflection of the lights behind them being reflected off the glass.

Then there was a witness who was performing "astrophotography" and claimed he recorded a UFO. He is not much of an astrophotographer as the stars were out of focus. Despite his claims of it not being a lens flare, this is exactly what it appears to be. You can see the light source at the bottom right of the camera (it illuminates the house and tree). Not surprisingly the "UFO" is in the upper left of center, opposite of the light source.

The best report was last. Two teens in their mother's car were out late at night in Laconia, NH. While they were parked, a UFO came by, picked up their car, and dropped it damaging the undercarriage and setting off the air bags. News reports seem to indicate the report made to MUFON /NUFORC was not quite accurate. Maybe it is just me but it sounds like the kids were out joy riding, damaged the

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

car, and then blamed it on a UFO. It will be interesting to see how MUFON handles this one.

Last month, I included a link to Pierre Charles Dubreuil, who had sent me an e-mail regarding the confessions of an ex-raelian member. I mistakenly thought he was the person. The actual ex-member is Jean Denis Saint Cyr. Apparently, he was a "bishop" in the movement.

Randall Fitzgerald documents his experience with the Arizona UFOs from 1997. His efforts to track down the flight of Tutor aircraft were interesting. It appears that this search was conducted recently making it difficult to find records that are probably destroyed. I disagree with his hologram conclusions though. It is too great a stretch. When trying to create a hypothesis, one should not make too many assumptions. He is assuming that the observations of the "dark object" were highly accurate. I think this month's article on the matter demonstrates this is not quite true.

A very interesting blog I was alerted to is "No more stupid lights"! You have to love the title and the authors disdain for youtube videos of people recording airplanes and satellites. Their web site is also pretty good. However, they disappointed me after posting a blog entry of a "photograph" of a 1990 Belgium triangle and stating it was a classified recon craft. There is no evidence for this and the photograph looked like a digital creation rather than a scan of a negative or print. I would hope the author would be a bit more critical. Still, the web site/blog is worth watching.

A different perspective had Kevin Randle posting a lengthy number of posts regarding the Washington National UFO sightings press conference in 1952. It was very informative to see the transcript of the conference. I am sure people will interpret it the way they think but it does provide a bit of UFO history. Unfortunately for the flow of the blog, Professor Moore passed away and Kevin posted a blog entry for this. Almost immediately, everyone began their Roswell comments on both sides of the fence and the remaining Washington DC sightings blog entries

seem to have been ignored. People just kept posting on the Moore entry. This is no great surprise as the number of comments approached 100. Everyone eventually lost interest and the positions remained the same.

Not happy with this, Randle inspired more Roswell exchanges in two more postings concerning "A dispassionate look at Roswell". The response was anything but "dispassionate". Paul Kimball made the only "dispassionate" comment:

But that's the problem - the UFO phenomenon has become so entangled in the Roswell / crashed saucer / government cover-up stories that "dispassionate" and reasoned discussion about it is impossible. There is no room in this world for the true sceptic, who entertains the ETH as a valid hypothesis, but recognizes that there are any number of other possible explanations for what remains a mystery. Instead, the debate - such as it is - has been cast in manichean terms.

Mr. Kimball is "casting pearls before swine".

Randle's best moment was when he announced that Robert Bigelow had purchased MUFON and NUFORC and combined them to make NUFON. Of course, this all happened on April 1st. I was actually beginning to believe this until he stated Seth Shostak was placed in charge! Like that would really happen!

Joe Capp announced that "debunkers" better beware of the never ending UFO "flap" that will start this summer. Apparently, he has deduced that UFOs are more common during summer than winter. Well, that is no surprise. All it will mean is there will be more people out misidentifying things they are not used to seeing at night (like the ISS, fireball meteors, scintillating stars, Venus, etc.). Capp predicts that this "flap" will have some of the most astounding encounters to date. Let me know when we have the landing on the White House lawn.

There was an interesting blog called UFO clearinghouse that came to my attention. At first I was intrigued because

it seemed to be discussing MUFON cases that were being investigated. I always wanted to see an update on various case investigations. However, after careful examination, I realized it was only select cases and the group seems to be performing these investigations on their own. Well, at least they are trying.

Billy Cox pulled a boo-boo. His article inappropriately linked a clip from the film about secret KGB UFO files showing a tube-like UFO being pursued by a MIG-21 from the cockpit point of view. Of course, this film had been debunked long ago by numerous discussion boards when aviation buffs recognized a glaring error. The film makers (not surprisingly) were not very thorough in examining this film for authenticity because it shows an ACES-II ejection seat of AMERICAN design. The standard MIG-21 ejection seat does not look like this and I doubt the Soviets put American ejection seats in their aircraft. I think it is time for UFOlogists to stop putting this film up as some sort of proof because it is a hoax.

There was an interesting news story about Area 51 in the Seattle Times. The stories told by aging veterans demonstrated there was nothing "alien" about activities there. Just a lot of interesting aircraft being tested. I enjoyed reading about how they paid a sheriff and a family who took some pictures/saw the crash of an SR-71 in Utah \$25K (Peter Merlin described this event in SUNlite 1-4). I guess all those Roswell people are angry because they just got threatened without the payoff.

Jame Carrion apparently has called it quits with organized UFOlogy. His commentary "Goodbye UFOlogy, hello Truth" contains well chosen words worth reading by anyone familiar with UFOlogy. Perhaps his best statement is, "*That in a nutshell is the sad state of Ufology today, humans deceiving humans.*" Based on what I have read over the years on the subject, I can't disagree with his opinion.

A Video of a UFO being pursued by some RAF fighter jets turned out to be a computer generated hoax. Congratulations to UFO blogger for their detective work! It was later revealed by the creator that it was a hoax. Remember, *humans deceiving humans.*

The Roswell Corner

More of “a whole lot of nuthin”

Recently, an anonymous source sent me a copy of the first progress report associated with the research regarding Titanium Alloys by the Battelle institute in 1948. However, the report later appeared on the DTIC web site for everyone to view. As I stated last issue, it is no big deal but feel free to read it for yourself. Mr. Bragalia, in another “challenge” e-mail told me that I did not have a clue and that the first report was more revealing than the second. I am not sure what he was reading but I don't see it. The last time I discussed the progress report (SUNlite 1-3), I pointed out that Mr. Bragalia's claims appeared to be highly exaggerated. My opinion of this did not change with the release of the first progress report.

Billy Cox states there is a feeble connection to a Mr. John Burlin (J.B.) Johnson, who happened to be the chief of the metallurgy group at Wright-Patterson. The cover letter for the report states that Johnson requested certain alloy studies made previously under a different contract be included in this report. As a result they carried forward information from the previous contract and included it. Johnson, who would be receiving copies of the report, seems to have wanted the information included because it was pertinent. These progress reports were eventually assembled together as a complete work. This is why the second progress report started on page 61. It appears that Johnson's intention was for them to include the previous studies in the first progress report so that the background upon which these studies were being made was included. This is not that big a deal but in “Roswell land”, things are never that simple.

In “Roswell land's” highly complex world of government subterfuge and conspiracy, Johnson is now the linchpin associated with Roswell. Johnson is subtly prompting these scientists to include these studies to replicate the miracle metal even though there is no hint of Roswell or any exotic metal properties (in-

cluding Nitinol) in any of these reports. Roswellian logic wins out over the more simple explanation.

Bragalia has since informed me that he has linked just about every person involved with studying Titanium at the time as being “obsessed” with UFOs. The implications of this “obsession” are that all of them knew something about Roswell and that made them enthusiastic about studying the subject. However, I think the use of the word “obsessed” is an exaggeration. For instance, Bragalia's claim that Dr. Linus Pauling was “obsessed” with UFOs was shown to be without merit when I contacted Dr. Robert Paradowski. He personally knew Pauling and was one of Bragalia's “sources”. Dr. Paradowski stated that Pauling DID NOT have an immense library of UFO books (as claimed by Bragalia) and had only a passing interest in the subject. Like all of Bragalia's links to Roswell it takes real imagination to create them. Mr. Bragalia seems to have plenty of that to go around.

In my opinion, suggesting these scientists and engineers were involved in some massive cover-up is not giving them the credit they deserve for all their own personal achievements. Suggesting they received “help”, in the form of some alien metal that nobody has ever seen since 1947, diminishes their accomplishments. Stating they really did not discover these things by using rumor, innuendo, and wild stories is the same as stating their work was fraudulent.

100 Proof Roswell

Bragalia also suggests that the exposure to the Roswell UFO crash was so disturbing that it caused various people to become alcoholics. One statistic he does not mention stands out in my mind. According to statistics, there are 14 million Americans that suffer from alcohol related illnesses. Considering that there are over 300 million Americans, this means roughly 4% of the population has this problem. If we take a sample of all the Roswell witnesses and contacts that supposedly occurred (numbering in the hundreds if you listen to Bragalia et.al.), it seems likely, you would find about a dozen or so with some record of abusing alcohol.

Bragalia's evidence (some of it based on simple rumor) is a mere five witnesses,

who supposedly had some form of Alcohol abuse in relation to Roswell. This is well within the statistical norm for abuse. We don't even have proof that Dr. Center (see SUNlite 1-3) or Lt. Gov. Montoya (see Pflock - Roswell: Inconvenient facts and the will to believe) were even involved with Roswell. This really cuts the list down to three people, who were known to be in the area in July 1947. If people were really affected as he claims, there would have been dozens of alcoholics and psychological breakdowns. Instead, it seems as if most people were unaffected.

In my opinion, taking advantage of people's personal addictions/problems to publish a highly suspect story is really not good journalistic practice. Of course, this is “Roswell land”, where those willing to believe will accept and applaud this kind of garbage. For the more critical readers, it is tabloid style research meant to “shock” readers and gain notoriety.

Obersturmführer Easley?

One of the cornerstones of the Roswell legend is that base personnel and military police supposedly imprisoned people, threatened civilians with bodily harm, and damaged civilian property. If we are to believe these things actually happened, we have to consider why these men acted this way. They just did not decide to do so on their own. They had to have had orders. Many crashed UFO proponents point to Edwin Easley as being in charge of security associated with the crashed spaceship so he would be the person giving such orders. This makes him guilty of any crimes that these men committed. Even if Easley was ordered to tell these soldiers to conduct themselves in this fashion, he would still be responsible. If they conducted themselves this way on their own, it would be Easley's responsibility to report it and punish those involved. There is no record of such punishments and there are no records of any orders given to Easley to allow the men to act like a bunch of jackbooted thugs. This leaves us with two possibilities. The first is the stories of threats and damaged property are highly exaggerated OR Edwin Easley is responsible for the despicable actions of his men. I think the first possibility is most likely. Why do proponents paint a scenario that makes Easley the bad guy but then portray him as a saint? You can't have it both ways.

Professor Charles B. Moore, who played a key role in the genesis of what is known as the “Roswell Incident,” died on March 2nd in Socorro, New Mexico. Moore was a professor emeritus of physics at New Mexico Tech, where I studied under him in the 1970s.

The “Roswell Incident” was merely a footnote in Moore’s very busy life. Moore was well known in the field of atmospheric physics, and received the very impressive Otto C. Winzen Lifetime Achievement Award of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. The American Geophysical Union gave Moore a fellowship, and he also received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Atmospheric Electricity Community. Moore’s exploits included traveling in a balloon to the edge of space - 80,000 feet up - where he photographed the planet Venus without atmospheric interference for the first time. (This occurred well before modern space travel.)

As chairman of NM Tech’s Langmuir Laboratory for Atmospheric Research (located in the Magdalena mountains), Moore led world-class research on lightning and cloud formation for years. He was a champion of blunt lightning rods; while Benjamin Franklin’s invention of lightning rods was a great achievement, Franklin’s insistence that sharp tips make for better rods (supposedly because it allows streamers to “discharge” high potentials) has unfortunately persisted to this day. Moore evaluated many rods in a multi-year experiment at Langmuir Lab. In eight years, 12 blunt rods (one-half to one inch diameter) were struck, but no Franklin sharp rods and no early streamer devices were ever hit by lightning. Professor Moore also provided key support for retaining lightning rod standards at the U.S. National Fire Protection Association, where they had come under fire by promoters of pseudoscientific schemes such as “early streamer emission” methods. Moore also worked for years with Dr. Bernard Vonnegut, the brilliant scientist who discovered that silver iodide could be used for cloud seeding. (This inspired Vonnegut’s brother, novelist Kurt Vonnegut, to write “Cat’s Cradle,” about a hypothetical and dangerous form of water called “Ice 9.”)

As one of his physics students, I was im-

Charles B. Moore 1920-2010

Dave Thomas



Charlie Moore posing with an ML-307C version of the infamous radar reflectors. Photo by Dave Thomas.

pressed by Moore’s fairness, humility, willingness to share credit for scientific accomplishments with his juniors, and his all-around no-nonsense attitudes. After one particularly grueling electromagnetics class, I told Professor Moore that I’d found a mistake in his analysis of a lightning measurement gadget, due to neglecting the real product of two imaginary terms in the derivation. Moore politely suggested I take another look at it, but after examining it further himself, he realized I was right. Later that day, Moore came up to tell me about his find in one of the physics labs, where I was “reconditioning” (e.g. removing mouse droppings from) department oscilloscopes. He promptly took me off that task, and started me on working some tricky elliptic integrals he was using for a model of lightning bolts. Moore had no patience for sloppy work or laziness, however – on one occasion, he handed out graded papers to the entire E&M class, gingerly tendering each paper to its owner as if it was tainted.

During World War II, Moore worked with Athelstan Spilhaus, Sr., who was one of the instructors at the Army Air Corps meteorological training school. Charlie served behind enemy lines in the China-Burma-India theater. When the war ended, he finished his undergraduate degree at Georgia Tech. He was then recruited by Spilhaus, and became a graduate stu-

dent at New York University. There, he became a key member of the “Constant Altitude Balloon Project,” which had the unclassified purpose of finding out how to keep large gas balloons at the same altitude (no easy task, as when the sun sets, the air inside the balloon contracts, making them plummet). This project had a classified connection, however – its real purpose was to help deploy Project Mogul, a top-secret mission with the goal of detecting Soviet nuclear tests via measuring rumbles from the detonations. The idea for the program traces back to the 1883 explosion of volcano Krakatoa, which was so loud that it could be heard in many cities around the globe. Analysis of those rumbles indicated that the sound waves from the volcanic eruption had been carried around the world in a natural sound-conducting layer of atmosphere between the troposphere and the stratosphere.

The first tests of balloon deployments, in New Jersey, failed spectacularly, so the whole group relocated to Alamogordo in the summer of 1947. The NYU group’s first launch, on June 4, 1947, was lost somewhere around Arabela, N.M. Balloon “Chase crews” in those days didn’t use jaunty pickup trucks, but instead flew B-17s that followed the balloon trains, listening for data. The complex, 600-foot-long assemblage of Flight No. 4 included two dozen balloons, three



Moore's hand-drawn recollection of the "hieroglyphic"-like symbols on the Signal Corps' radar reflectors.

radar reflectors, some parachutes and black boxes. The reflectors were shaped like jacks – eight-sided structures made of balsa wood and tough, shiny, metallic-coated paper. A toy company in Manhattan made them on the side, and the company chose a curiously decorated tape to reinforce the reflectors. Moore launched dozens of these targets, and marveled time and again at the unknown purpose of the strange hieroglyphic-like markings on the reflectors. Ten days after the June 4 launch, rancher Mac Brazel came across a field strewn with remnants of balloons and bits of metallic foil – almost certainly the remains of NYU Flight No. 4. Ten days after that, on June 24, pilot Kenneth Arnold reported a sighting of strange flying objects that “skipped like saucers.”

That event plunged the nation into a brief but intense “flying disk” craze, with frantic new reports of sightings of the “disks” coming every day. There was even a total of \$3,000 offered for the recovery of a real disk. It was in this atmosphere, after the Fourth of July weekend of 1947, that rancher Brazel decided to take some of that strange material to the sheriff, who took it to Major Marcel at the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF). But, Marcel's expertise was primarily in making assessments of bomb damage from aerial photographs. He had never seen a radar reflector; the only time one like it had ever been used previously in New Mexico was to measure winds aloft before the first atomic blast at Trinity Site in 1945.

The unusual flexible metal paper, and especially the strange hieroglyphic-like symbols, probably combined with the national “Flying Disk” frenzy to convince Marcel that this was, indeed, a real “flying disk.” And so it was announced by the Roswell Army Air Force Intelligence Office (Marcel's group), in a press release on July 8, 1947. When General Roger Ramey heard of this turn of events, he called for the materials and Marcel to be flown out to Fort Worth that very afternoon.

This was done, and Ramey called down his weather officer to look at the debris. This man, Irving Newton, was excited to see a real “flying disk” for himself. That

is, until he walked in to the room to see what he promptly told Ramey was simply a radar target and some old weather balloons. The general held a press conference shortly afterward, and Roswell's 15 minutes of fame were over. At least, they were over for three decades.

In the late 1970s, the Roswell legend re-emerged from obscurity to become the best-accepted UFO case of them all. Marcel was interviewed, and declared that the materials were “not of this Earth.” Stories of government harassment and strange materials began to surface, and the legend grew.

Ten years after that, after Marcel and Brazel had died, the stories began to include the mention of alien bodies and autopsies and such.

The '90s became the Decade of Roswell, and the incident retains UFOdom's “best case” mantle, although interest and attendance has declined in recent years (see my article “Roswell Update: Fading Star?” in the *Skeptical Inquirer* Volume 33.1, January / February 2009).

Project Mogul was never very successful in its primary goal, and other methods were eventually adopted to track Soviet nuclear activity. The Air Force didn't even put Mogul flights together with tales of the Roswell Incident. That connection was first realized by UFO researcher Robert Todd, and was independently discovered by Placitas writer Karl Pflock. Todd contacted Charles Moore, who told the Air Force about it, and subsequent research clinched the connection.

For decades, Moore and coworkers had thought the Roswell flap of 1947 was probably due to one of their polyethylene balloon launches in July of that year. It wasn't until reviewing witness descriptions of the actual debris that Moore realized the “Incident” was instead one of the huge and awkward neoprene balloon trains launched in June of 1947.

Moore described his experiences to the local skeptics' group New Mexicans for Science and Reason in 1995, and this became the genesis for my *Skeptical Inquirer* article “The Roswell Incident and Project Mogul” (Volume 19.4, July / August 1995, online at <http://www.csicop.org>).

[org/si/show/roswell_incident_and_project_mogul](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/roswell_incident_and_project_mogul)). Moore published another account of incident in the book *UFO Crash at Roswell: The Genesis of a Modern Myth*, co-authored by Benson Saler, Charles A. Ziegler, and Charles B. Moore (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). Included in this book was an analysis of weather conditions around Roswell in early June of 1947, and Moore's conclusion that, once their balloon train had become lost near Arabela, it most likely descended to the Foster Ranch itself, right where rancher Brazel found the remains weeks later.

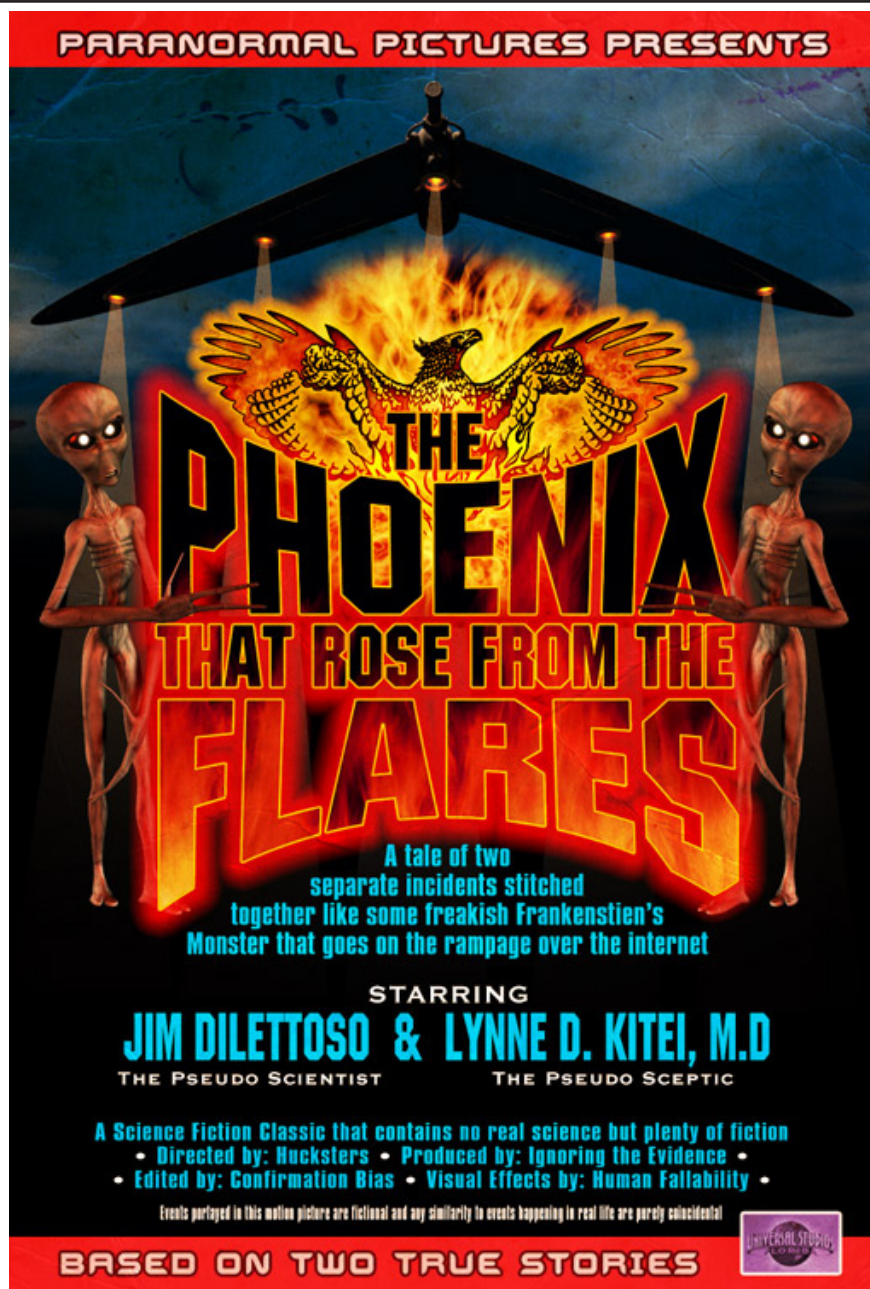
While these calculations have been harshly criticized by David Rudiak, a discussion I had just a few years ago with Professor Moore, before his health had declined too much, bears directly on this criticism. And what Moore said was simply this: the publishers of the Saler/Ziegler/Moore book mangled the table of values explaining the MOGUL trajectory calculations, and mashed together alternating rows into single, garbled rows of data. This explains much of the confusion which Rudiak has so unfairly blamed on intentional malfeasance on Moore's part.

In the end, Moore's connection to the Roswell Incident were just a minor footnote in the busy life of an accomplished atmospheric physicist, space explorer, and teacher. While MOGUL and other activities led him away from getting a doctoral degree, Moore was awarded a well-deserved honorary Ph.D. degree in Physics from New Mexico Tech in 2003. He will be missed.

Editor note: Dave included an image from Dennis Balthasar's web site showing the deck of cards he made for “debunkers” of the Roswell story. According to David, this is the Dennis Balthasar school of UFOlogical Rhetoric: “If you can't Lick ‘Em, Demonize ‘Em”. I was disappointed that Balthasar only gave Professor Moore the nine of diamonds. He should have been the “ace of spades”.



The case of the Arizona UFOs thirteen years later



Artwork courtesy of "Psycho-clown"

Klass' UFOlogical principle number 10. *Many UFO cases seem puzzling and unexplainable simply because case investigators have failed to devote a sufficiently rigorous effort to the investigation.*¹

On March 13th, 1997, a series of events occurred in the state of Arizona that UFO proponents would declare was the most amazing UFO event of recent times. Between 8:00 and 8:30 PM (which I call the 8PM event) a dark object, the shape of a triangle or "V", illuminated only by a series of lights, navigated across the state from northwest to southeast. At one point it passed over the city of Phoenix,

Arizona, where "hundreds" of people reported seeing this amazing object. Less than 2 hours later, around 10PM, several individuals videotaped lights appearing over the Estrella Mountains to the south of Phoenix. These lights hovered for several minutes and then would mysteriously disappear. These two events would eventually be called the "Phoenix lights/Arizona UFOs".

Seeing is believing

UFO investigators in the Phoenix area had their big break. They immedi-

ately began collecting reports, appearing on television and radio, and hurling accusations at nearby military bases for not protecting the public or covering up the fact they knew something about the events. They quickly proclaimed the case unexplainable and strongly suggested this was evidence of alien visitation.

All sorts of observations were presented concerning the 8PM event. The consensus was that there were 5-7 lights in a "V" shape, the object was very low, it flew at "blimp" speed, it was silent, and, for some, there was a mysterious dark object behind the lights. Some eyewitnesses reported a sense of fear and awe as they saw this huge vehicle flying over the city. Most of the local investigators were quick to present these witnesses but less eager to present witnesses that told a slightly different and less exotic version of events. When potential explanations were offered, they were dismissed with little thought.

*These explanations have nothing to do with the scientific process which involves gathering all of the data, analyzing the data, and formulating a carefully crafted hypothesis to account for the data. This process takes time and effort.*²

The 10PM event was equally compelling to investigators. Several actually saw and videotaped the lights. UFO investigator Bill Hamilton observed the lights with a small telescope and described them as orbs of light. It was these videos that were often shown on television to describe the Phoenix lights/Arizona UFOs even though they only showed the second event.

Military cover-up

The first thing that UFO groups began to do was demand information from the US Military. Initial responses by the USAF were typical of a military unit. Somebody contacted an enlisted person at Luke Air Force Base (AFB) in the public affairs office and that individual made the comment that none of the aircraft were up that night. This was corrected a few days later by the officer, who was actually in charge of the public affairs office. After further investigation, they discov-



Dilettoso pseudoscience

Jim Dilettoso was the “star” of the Arizona UFOs event. His computer analysis of the light curves produced by the lights supposedly demonstrated how unique the lights in the 10 PM videos were and that they could not be flares. This was not Dilettoso’s first experience with UFOs. He was one of many who stood by the Billy Meier and his claims of photographing UFOs. Most of UFOlogy considers them to be fake but it seems Dilettoso used his vast computer skills to determine that they were authentic.

In March of 1998, Tony Ortega wrote a piece for the Phoenix newstimes, which demonstrated that Dilettoso’s effort to examine the “spectrum” of the lights in the video tape was pseudoscientific nonsense. Dilettoso repeated this type of analysis on the recent National Geographic program. Comparing images of flares he obtained and the lights, he declared the lights were not flares. This work was flawed in 1997 and continued to be flawed in 2010.

In mid-March of this year, the UFO Chronicles linked a story about Dilettoso being interviewed on “The Paracast” last August. There he revealed that somebody performed a frame lineup with the Kryston video. Dilettoso seemed shocked that it was discovered that the lights winked off the instant they met the ridge line of the Estrella Mountains. He then complained that in 1997, they did not have this computer ability. Didn’t Dr. Rudin do the exact same thing in 1997?! The general impression given during the interview was the Dilettoso was conceding it was possible that these lights were flares!

The date of the interview seems to imply this was done for the National Geographic program. However, this was never seen and, instead, we saw Dilettoso’s pseudoscientific analysis. If this analysis was done for the program and was cut from the show, it demonstrates a deception by the producers and all involved in the program. Would this be any surprise?



Dr. Rudin of Cognitech demonstrates that the 10PM videos lights disappeared because they were behind the Estrella Mountains and not in front. This was consistent with the flare explanation for the 10PM event. Images from Discovery Channel’s “UFO over Phoenix”



ered that there were aircraft up but they were not involved. This was seized upon by various UFO investigators to suggest the USAF was lying. Bill Hamilton would state in his MUFON report:

It seems like the official statements made to members of the press and public by those representing our Air Force are, to put it delicately, on a course deviation from the truth.³

Of course, they ignored the more likely possibility that somebody just goofed and did not know that aircraft were up that night.

Another version of the UFO cover-up story came out through the National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC). In this instance, an anonymous individual called in and declared that F-15 aircraft were sent up from nearby Luke AFB, to intercept the UFO but they could not because their systems were neutralized by the object. This does not agree with the fact that Luke AFB normally does not have F-15s. They were a training base that flew F-16s. Additionally, none of the eyewitness reports describe any fighter jets flying near the V-shaped formation of lights.

It is a common theme in most UFO cases to involve the USAF in some way. If there is a nearby USAF base, it can be guaranteed that UFOlogists will find some reason to suggest they are covering up the event. Resorting to conspiracy rants is a sure way to “rally the troops” and distrust anything the USAF or government was going to say.

The 10PM event debunked

In May of 1997, UFO investigator Richard Motzer began to conclude that the lights in the 10PM event were just distant flares being dropped by aircraft at the Barry Goldwater test range over

50 miles south of the City. He was immediately characterized by some UFO investigators as a “debunker”, an epithet utilized by some UFOlogists to demonize anyone suggesting a UFO event can be something other than an alien spaceship. Motzer’s opinion was ignored by those promoting these videos as evidence.

In late July, 1997, Captain Eileen Bienz “dropped a bomb” on the 10PM event by declaring they were indeed flares dropped over the Barry Goldwater test range by a visiting Air National Guard unit from Maryland operating out of Davis-Monthan AFB in Tuscon. The response by many was that it was another Air Force cover-up because the original claim was that there were no aircraft operating at the range that night. This was due to a typical foul up in that the logs checked were for the craft stationed at Tuscon. The logs for visiting aircraft were not examined and were missed. Closer examination by Bienz, resolved the mystery.

Despite this information several investigators clung to the idea that the lights appeared in front of the mountains and not over them. This was shown to be inaccurate when Cognitech examined the videos for the Discovery Channel program, “UFOs over Phoenix”. Dr. Lenny Rudin demonstrated that the lights were above the mountains when they appeared and then disappeared as they descended behind the mountains. His efforts were duplicated by Dr. Paul Scowan in 1998 at the request of Tony Ortega. Also in 1998, UFO investigator Dr. Bruce Maccabee wrote a paper that demonstrated, through triangulation, that the lights were very distant and behind the mountains towards the test range. This was all consistent with the statement by Captain Bienz regarding the Maryland Air National Guard.

Ignoring this evidence, the proponents

The data breakdown

I realize that some will question how I assigned the values of each report. It is a subjective measure in my opinion and I tried to err in favor of caution. The reports can be interpreted in many ways. Here are two examples:

Chino Valley report

The lights moved at a relatively slow pace in comparison to commercial jet traffic in the area and as the lights passed overhead they went out as though they were all on the front edges of the object and were obscured by the object as it passed. All lights were uniform in size and all appeared white. Path of travel would seem to be from the area of Kingman, Arizona passing just west of Chino Valley and on toward Prescott Valley. Path would be slightly north and east of the Prescott airport "Love Field".

I had to figure out if this was a "dark object" or "light formation" report. It would have been a formation report if it were not for the statement about the lights being associated with the front edge of an object. To be conservative, I gave this a "dark object" classification even though it could easily have been classified as just a formation of lights.

Prescott report

At around 8:15 on 03/13/97 four of us observed a v shaped object coming at us with bright lights. As it got closer we got out some binoculars and looked at it, what looked like white lights were actually two lights forming one. One light being green the other one was red. During this time the oddest thing about this, was there was no noise at all. There was no moon to backlight this so we could only see the lights. I thought perhaps because there was no noise that it might have been a pedal plane that I saw on the discovery channel once. It appeared to be about 1000 feet in the air.²

Here the witness describes the formation as a V-shaped object but really gives no reason to call it a V-shaped object. As a result, I chose to classify it as a formation of lights.

Looking at the reports filed over the last thirteen years, we see a fairly consistent spread of data. The original reports indicated an even distribution over the three classes. This remained the same over the years with a slight weight given to the dark object reports. This probably has to do with people being influenced by the television programs depicting a dark object. What was a formation of lights for them in 1997 may have transformed into a dark shape behind the lights through the power of suggestion.

Year	dark object (tot/pct)	fixed formation (tot/pct)	non-fixed formation (tot/pct)
1997	5/31	6/38	5/31
1998	1/50	0	1/50
1999	0	1/50	1/50
2000	3/60	0	2/40
2001	0	0	0
2002	2/50	1/25	1/25
2003	1/100	0	0
2004	0	0	1/100
2005	1/25	3/75	0
2006	1/17	2/33	3/50
2007	0	0	1/100
2008	2/67	1/33	0
2009	1/50	0	1/50

Worried that I may have been biased in my categorizing of the reports, I chose to do some polling of various individuals in a private e-mail regarding the 1997 reports. There was a limited response but the average of the responses I did receive were pretty much the same as I determined.

I realize that the NUFORC database is not the only source but the on-line MUFON database has only a few reports made many years after the event. Bill Hamilton's original report only listed a few witnesses and Richard Motzer stated he had 53 credible reports in his MUFON article from July 1997. Finally, Mike Fortson has claimed to have received hundreds of e-mail reports. The actual raw and unedited reports from all of these sources seem to be unavailable so we are left with the NUFORC raw reports as our only source of real data.

What we know from the NUFORC data is that not everyone saw a dark object and a good portion made observations that indicated there was no such object attached to the lights. Ignoring or hoping this information will not be noticed demonstrates a desire to deceive the public and accept only the most exotic reports as evidence for what was seen that night.

Notes and references

1. Davenport, Peter. National UFO Center UFO Reports Database. Available WWW: <http://www.nuforc.org/webreports/002/S02072.html>
2. Davenport, Peter. National UFO Center UFO Reports Database. Available WWW: <http://www.nuforc.org/webreports/002/S02073.html>

continued to find reasons to keep the 10PM videos as proof of something exotic. Jim Dileto, a self-proclaimed video expert, who owned "Village Labs" attempted to prove that the lights were not flares by examining their characteristics recorded on the video. Dileto's work was flawed and has long since been refuted. Still he got air time and people "want" to believe his work is valid.

Even today, the 10PM videos are considered a "true UFO" event by some. However, others now have offered the theory that the 10PM event was an "intentional diversion" created by the US military to keep attention away from the 8PM event, which was truly inexplicable. They state this despite there being no evidence and ignoring the fact that the Maryland ANG had already been scheduled for this exercise long before 8PM on the 13th of March. This kind of reasoning is based on a will to believe in conspiracies and not on any actual facts.

The 8PM event

The 8PM fly over was probably the most interesting event of the two. It had an air of mystery and awe to it that just begged for examination. When I first read about this, I was impressed but I also felt it could have an explanation.

My first attempt at reading Bill Hamilton's MUFON report was one of frustration. There was very little useful data associated with it. Nobody seemed to obtain/list locations, angular size, azimuth, or elevation angles from the eyewitnesses even though the MUFON investigator's manual requests it! Instead, I had to wade through all sorts of descriptions by people to try and understand what happened.

After reading the various sources, I had gathered some 26 reports of varying types from the National UFO reporting center (NUFORC) database, Bill Hamilton's summary report from MUFON, and various accounts in the newspapers from the area. The data proved interesting in that only seven reports, in my opinion, directly indicated a dark triangular/V-shaped object behind the lights. Twelve of the reports indicated independent motion between the lights and the remaining seven just described the lights

Mitch Stanley misunderstood and misrepresented

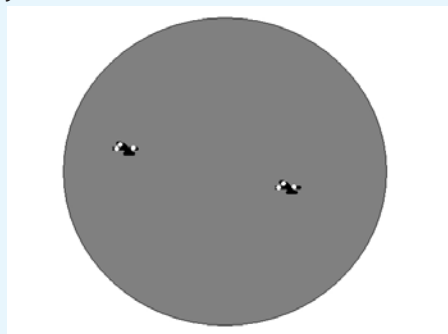
On March 13, 1997, Mitch Stanley was in his backyard sky watching with his 10" dobsonian telescope. What Mitch saw that night was far different than what many of the more prominent UFO witnesses stated:

That night Mitch and his mother, Linda, were in the backyard and noticed the lights coming from the north. Since the lights seemed to be moving so slowly, Mitch attempted to capture them in the scope. He succeeded, and the leading three lights fit in his field of vision. Linda asked what they were. "Planes," Mitch said.

It was plain to see, he says. What looked like individual lights to the naked eye actually split into two under the resolving power of the telescope. The lights were located on the undersides of squarish wings, Mitch says. And the planes themselves seemed small, like light private planes.

Stanley watched them for about a minute, and then turned away. It was the last thing the amateur astronomer wanted to look at. "They were just planes, I didn't want to look at them," Stanley says when he's asked why he didn't stare at them longer. He is certain about what he saw: "They were planes. There's no way I could have mistaken that."

I managed to catch up with Mitch via e-mail in February 1998 to gather more specific details. He gave me approximate angular sizes/azimuth/elevations of the formation. Mitch reported that he saw three lights on "straight wing" aircraft and added that he fit two of them in his field of view (about 1 degree) and a third was just outside of it.



The entire formation was about five degrees in size. It did not surprise me that Mitch said that he had used his telescope previously to follow birds and airplanes. I remember being his age and doing similar observations with small refractors. I even followed a Delta rocket launch from my back yard once! It helped that I was

150 miles away.

UFO proponents have often stated there was no way that Stanley could have actually followed aircraft with his telescope because they moved too fast and the image would be inverted, making it difficult to determine if they really were aircraft. These were comments made by people who know nothing about using these instruments. Amateur astronomers have no problem "mentally flipping" the image upright. Tracking a formation of aircraft at the angular speeds reported would not have been that hard since Mitch had about a one-degree field of view.

Witness Mike Fortson has also added some exaggerations about what Mitch supposedly stated:

But here is where young Mitch struggled (keep in mind he was not the youngest participant present). During the question and answer segment, a couple of pilots and ex-military people responded that at night no pilot would be willing to fly in such formation. Especially wing_tip-to-wing_tip or even in tight formation, it's just too dangerous . . . and at night this just isn't done!²

It is amazing that Fortson and the other witnesses suddenly developed a skeptical attitude towards Mitch's observation but had no skepticism for those reporting an unworldly aircraft over a mile in size. Such is the power of belief over reason.

It is not unheard of for military pilots to fly together at night. Additionally, Mitch did not state they flew "wing tip-to-wing tip" like one would expect at an air show. Based on the descriptions he made about his observations, it seems they were about a half degree apart (which computes to over a hundred feet). Fortson's argument directly misrepresents what Stanley reported and is a poor argument at that.

Notes and references

1. Ortega, Tony. "The Great UFO Coverup." *Phoenix Newtimes*, 26 June 1997.
2. Fortson, Mike. "Shostak's "Phoenix Lights" Faux Pas. *UFO Chronicles blog*. Available WWW: <http://www.theufochronicles.com/2008/04/shostaks-phoenix-lights-faux-pas.html>

as a formation of lights.

As the years have passed more and more people have added their accounts to the NUFORC/MUFON database (See box on page 9). Curious I went through the NUFORC database again to see what the results of this search would produce. It is hard to read some of these raw reports. Some of the reports from that night do not describe the 8PM event and just describe orbs or various exotic lights. They were apparently unrelated to the event in question. When I weeded those out, I came up with a total of 47 reports. Exactly who saw what is difficult to state but I broke up the descriptions into three groups. The first were those who claimed to have seen a "dark object" of some kind with the lights. The second were those who saw a formation of lights that was fixed but made no comment that indicated the lights were attached to some object. The third group were those that saw a formation of lights that shifted, could see stars between the lights, or stated the lights were not attached to anything indicating a "non-fixed" formation of lights.

	dark object	fixed formation	non-fixed formation
Total	17	14	16
Percentage	36	30	34

The fixed formation of lights is the gray area here. Do they indicate a dark object not seen or do they just indicate a pattern of lights? It is very difficult to label these reports one way or the other. However, it is interesting that 1/3rd of these witnesses made observations that there was no physical object behind the lights.

Based on the witness descriptions and observations, one can create a reasonable flight path of the UFOs. They start northwest of Kingman, Arizona indicating an origin in Nevada. The UFOs then proceeded southeast towards Prescott, where they shifted direction southward towards Phoenix. After Phoenix, they shifted their path again slightly to the southeast towards Tuscon, where they mysteriously "disappeared".

Clues to the 8PM event

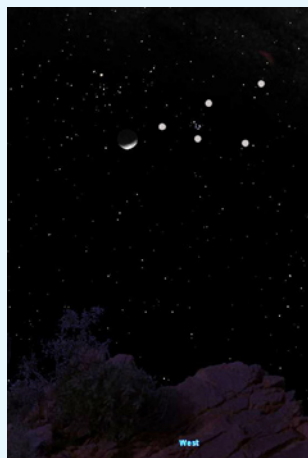
When I first learned about this event, I was curious about it. I e-mailed the astronomy groups in Arizona if they had any reports from their amateurs. I

Mike Fortson's unique observations

In my opinion, Mike Fortson made one of the most interesting observations of the night (next to Mitch Stanley). He made his initial report to NUFORC on April 3rd and, despite assuring us that the object was one large craft, made some observations that indicated otherwise:

As the craft passed thru the light of the moon the color of the moon changed to dingy yellow, and we could see horizontal "waves" as it passed. These waves were similar to gasoline fumes if one to take the lid off of a gas can, and look at the reflection of the fumes.¹

Fortson's moon observation was critical in that it was a very accurate measurement for the V-formation's angle of elevation at a specific moment in time (the elevation of the moon was about 40 degrees at the time of Fortson's observation).



My impression of how Fortson's observation may have actually appeared. Image from Orion's "Starry Night SE" planetarium program for March 13, 1997 around 8:30PM

This angle indicates an object that was much higher than treetop level. Observers over ten miles west of Fortson could also see the formation of lights. If it were only a few hundred feet off the ground, that would not be possible. Back in 1997, I used the flawed data from the Hamilton report to indicate the planes were over 30,000 feet in altitude. I had assumed that when people stated they saw the UFO pass overhead, they meant the zenith. It seems that as long as the lights were high in the sky, they were considered by inexperienced observers as "overhead".

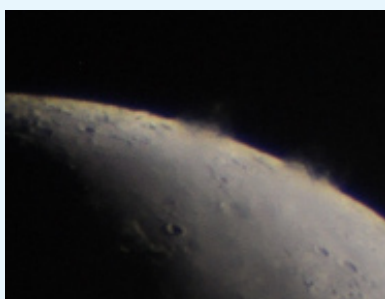
The route shown on the page 12 indi-

cates the formation passed approximately 4 miles to the west of Fortson over or just slightly west of the Price Freeway (rte 101). This computes to an elevation of about 17,000 feet or slightly higher. This is the kind of altitude described in the Fitzgerald article.

Mike Fortson's other comment is important. Seeing "horizontal waves" across the moon is the exact kind of effect one would expect from jet aircraft passing between him and the moon. He could not see the actual jets because they were just too small (about 4 minutes of arc or 1/8th the moon's disc size) and the jet would only be visible in front of the moon for a second or less. However, the exhaust would linger for a few seconds and that would create the effect seen.



Photograph I took of a propeller aircraft passing in front of the moon using a telescope. This is about the angular size one would expect of a standard size fighter/trainer jet seen from Fortson's position that night based on the proposed path and altitude.



"These waves were similar to gasoline fumes": The blurring of the moon by the exhaust of an aircraft in front of it (in this case it was an ATR turboprop aircraft). A jet aircraft or a formation of aircraft would have been more obvious.

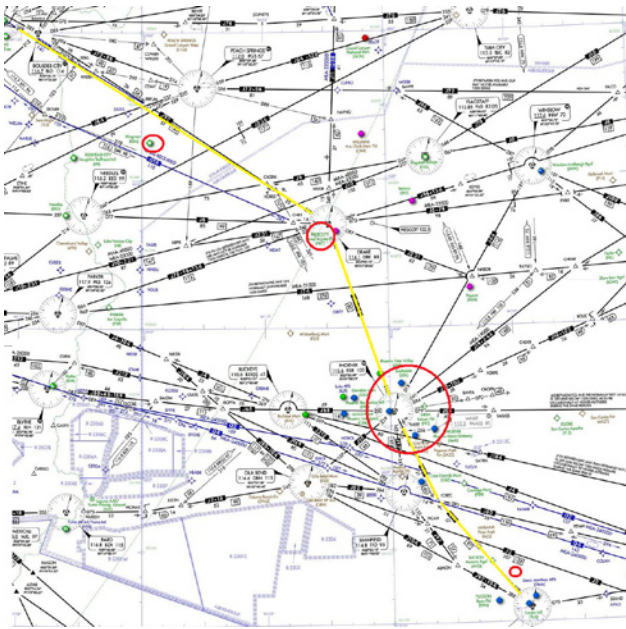
Notes and references

1. Davenport, Peter. National UFO Center UFO Reports Database. Available WWW: <http://www.nuforc.org/webreports/002/S02124.html>

received a response from one of the club officers, who stated that one of their members had observed the 8PM lights through his telescope and saw they were airplanes. To me, this seemed reasonable and I began to look at the reports from this point of view. Was it possible that people could have seen a formation of aircraft that evening and thought they saw something more exotic?

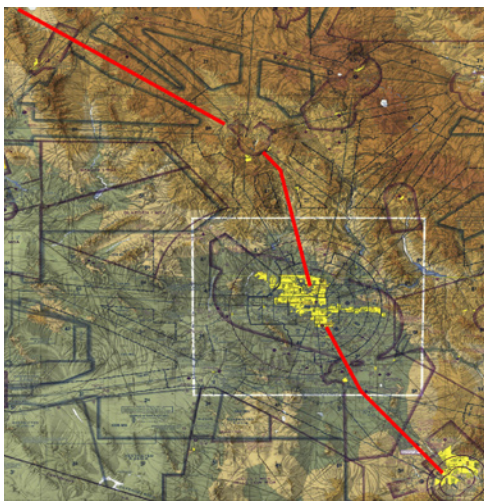
As the months passed in 1997, I learned that Mitch Stanley was the amateur who saw the airplanes through his telescope and his story was told by Tony Ortega in the Phoenix Newtimes. I also discovered a few others, who had made observations that were indicative of aircraft that night.

1. Rich Contry, who was driving west on Interstate 40 that night, made an unsolicited report to the UFOmind web site stating he saw the lights with binoculars and determined them to be aircraft.
2. The Mike Fortson observation revealed that when the "dark object" passed in front of the moon, it became translucent and left "waves" that distorted the moon. This can also be the type of description one would expect from an aircraft passing in front of the moon (see box on left).
3. Randy Fitzgerald, writing an article for Reader's digest, states he talked to a pilot on an American West flight, who saw the formation of lights. He and his copilot asked the enroute controller about them. The controller stated they were a formation of CT-144 Tutor aircraft flying at 19,000 feet. One of the pilots radioed and stated they were "snowbirds" flying "Tutors" (the CT-144 is an aircraft used by the Snowbird demonstration team). However, investigation revealed the Snowbird team was not in the area
4. Dark object witness Tim Ley also reported seeing a "distortion" waves behind the formation of lights.
5. Several witnesses described the lights not being one light but two. One even described examining the lights with binoculars and seeing



Above: Sectional chart showing the enroute airways for aircraft over 18,000 feet. Highlighted is the path a formation of planes would take. Red circles indicate concentrations of witnesses who reported the lights. compare this to the distribution of witnesses in the maps on page 14.

Below: Other sectional charts have similar airways present in case the aircraft were flying below 18,000 feet.



two lights, one red and one green. This is the standard lighting on aircraft wings (red-left, green-right).

6. The Terry Proctor video confirmed the observations by eyewitnesses that stated the lights were indepen-



Tutor aircraft flown by Canadian pilots in 1997. The Snowbird demonstration team flies a modified version of this craft. Note the taxi light in the front of the plane's nose. (From the Canadian Air Force web site)

dent of each other (see box on the lower right). This critical piece of evidence has often been ignored by UFO proponents.

Coupled with majority of the forty-seven NUFORC reports showing no craft, it appeared that the "V-shaped" craft testimony was more wishful thinking than accurate observation. It was a repeat of the Zond IV case (see page 14) with a slightly different stimulus.

The solution?

It is probably most interesting that the formation of lights followed the exact path one would expect from an aircraft that was flying from Las Vegas to Tucson Arizona (see charts to left). They would have taken the airway to Prescott, turned south towards Phoenix and then follow the airway to Tucson. Is this a mere coincidence? Is it just chance that UFO chose to follow the same route an airplane or group of airplanes would take?

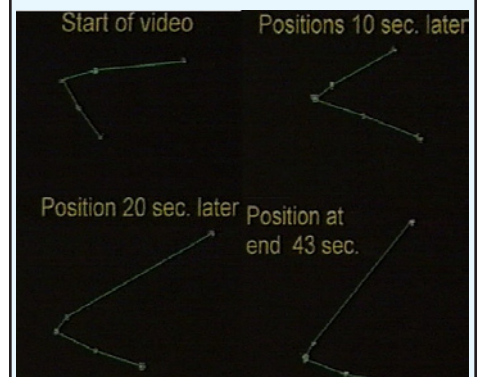
After reading Randy Fitzgerald's description of the American West report, I decided to revise some of my earlier estimates and conclusions about the formation of aircraft seen by Mitch Stanley. Mitch had reported that he had spotted straight-wing aircraft through his telescope. This gave me the impression that he might have seen A-10s or T-37s at very high altitude (>30,000 feet). However, Fitzgerald's description of Tutor aircraft got me rethinking this hypothesis. One of the programs that was in progress during the time period was something called "Operation snowbird". "Snowbird" was a program allowing units from northern states to fly to southern states to get flying time and proficiency training they could not

get because of weather issues at their home bases. It was "Snowbird" that got the Maryland Air National Guard flying in Arizona. It is likely that the formation of Canadian Tutors were transiting Arizona that evening as part of this same program, which is why they referred to themselves as "snowbirds".

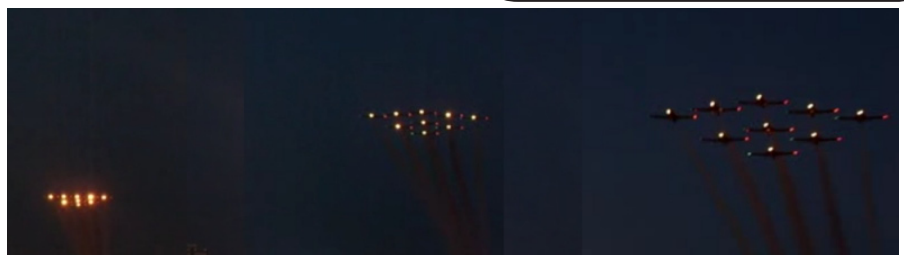
The Tutor in 1997 was a training aircraft flown by Canadian pilots. Pilots from Canada could have been flying in the southern United States as a group for proficiency and training. On this night, it is possible these pilots left Nellis AFB in Las Vegas, formed up and decided to make the trip in a V-shaped formation. Why they did this is unknown but it may have been an effort to conduct an exer-

The Terry Proctor video

Probably the most interesting piece of actual evidence from that night is the rarely mentioned video tape of Terry Proctor. He was located in Scottsdale and saw the formation of lights that night. Mr. Proctor's video shows something one would not expect from some lights attached to a fixed "dark object". The lights do not maintain a fixed position relative to each other. They appear to move back and forth as if they were individual objects trying to maintain position in formation. This is the kind of behavior one would expect from individual aircraft flying as group.



Frame grabs of the Terry Proctor video from the Discovery channel's "UFOs over Phoenix".



These are some images taken from a video shot of the Snowbirds at the 2006 Grey Cup. The left most image is interesting and shows the intensity of the nose taxi lights when viewed at the correct angle and the difficulty in seeing the aircraft at that distance.

cise in maintaining formation at night. For safety purposes, the pilots probably decided to keep the nose taxi light lit, which can be very bright (see image of the "Snowbirds" at the Grey cup on previous page).

Flying at 19,000 feet, the aircraft probably would go unheard by most witnesses and the aircraft would have appeared very small to the unaided eye. Add to this problem the light on the nose making it difficult to see any silhouette with the naked eye. This formation proceeded to Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson and spent the night there. The next day, they left for their next destination not knowing what had transpired (the local print media did not report the event until almost a week later). By the time it became a national news story in June, the pilots were north of the border, where they would have been oblivious to what transpired. Unless they watched these UFO programs or spent time on UFO web sites, they probably did not realize they had caused a massive UFO event. Since they were visiting aircraft, nobody probably checked the records to determine if a group of five visiting aircraft landed at Davis-Monthan around 9PM or if they were even recorded.

For those who doubt this possible answer, I suggest they watch the first two minutes of this video clip. It looks very much like what the witnesses for the 1997 event described. Kentaro Mori's explanation demonstrates that a formation of aircraft can produce such an effect.

It is a shame that the UFO groups investigating the events shortly after March 13th did not bother to request FAA radar tapes, flight plans, or anything else concerning flight operations that night. Had they done so, they might have resolved the case in short order. As it stands now, the records have probably long since been routinely destroyed.

Tomorrow and tomorrow...

Over thirteen years have passed and the puzzle is still missing a few pieces. However, it seems that the big picture can be seen. The clues were always there for those willing to examine the case. Early on, somebody gave this explanation for the case to UFO investigators and

they flatly rejected them. Writing shortly after the event, Bill Hamilton stated:

*Conventional explanations that were proffered included flares or a formation of airplanes, however when all witness testimony is taken into account, such conventional explanations do not seem consonant with the facts.*⁴

Of course, Bill had his own reason to reject the potential prosaic explanation but it has nothing to do with science. Bill would eventually write a book called "The Phoenix Lights Mystery", about his investigation. The on-line description for the book states:

*Some of the largest and most impressive unconventional airborne objects flew over one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States and the lack of response from the Air Force and local and state governments was dismissive as well as ridiculing the reports by observant witnesses. This book presents the whole story for the first time including the attempts to debunk the eyewitness testimony when the accounts show this mass sighting event to be one of the century's unsolved mysteries.*⁵

Apparently, Bill ignored the actual evidence and wrote his book based on a desire to believe rather than through actual scientific investigation.

Mike Fortson has made a name for himself when it comes to the Arizona UFO event. He is considered an expert witness and defender of the case. He writes articles on-line for "The UFO Chronicles" and other blogs. Fortson also appears on UFO radio and TV programs presenting his views on the case. It has been his "mission" to demonstrate that the case deserves serious investigation by qualified people.

Over the years, he has been critical of UFOlogy's non-investigation of the event:

How can some of these people claim the "Phoenix Lights" case was "fairly well investigated and presented?" Do they understand that no one from MU-FON AZ or Sky Watch International made written reports from witnesses? How could a case be examined without written or recorded reports? Both Richard Motzer and Bill Hamilton perceived the "5" 10 PM videos as the "holy grail" and failed to start at the beginning of the first report of unusual activity. By that I mean 8:16 in Palden, AZ. No one started there. How about 5:30 PM at Sunset Point near Crown King,

AZ? No one investigated that as well. And again thru Chino Valley, Prescott, Prescott Valley, Dewey Wickensburg, and well into the northern most part of the Phoenix metro area. No reports. They did not do a fairly good job at all. They did nothing! In fact it was done so poorly, how can these people claim to be researchers at all?

*....So how can this incident claim to be "fairly well investigated?" You have to be kidding! The media didn't investigate. The police didn't investigate. The only investigating that was done was the two 10 PM witnesses to the diversionary flare drop. And they both wrote books and failed to share any information.*⁶

When you count on UFOlogists, you may not get much of an investigation. Far too often, personal interests interfere. There is really no control over what these individuals write or how they investigate. My experience is that some UFO groups and people are more interested in self-promotion and less interested in "the truth".

Since he has "gone public", Fortson claims to have over 200 e-mails from people describing their experience that night. These reports were made over a decade later at his prompting. Are they contaminated by the publicity on the subject and are they going to place emphasis on the "dark object" reports? Ironically, he apparently has done nothing with these reports he has collected. They don't appear to be posted into a database or were investigated to see how accurate they might be. If this is the case, Fortson is almost as guilty as those he is criticizing.

Meanwhile, Larry Lowe has stepped in and claims that there is a group of UFOlogists who are now "finally" interested in investigating the case. Larry was showcased in the "UFOs over Phoenix" show on the National Geographic channel (see SUNlite 2-2):

*There are enough unanswered questions on this one UFO incident alone to merit a full formal series of investigation, with real resources put into both gathering material and conducting analysis....Despite the best effort of the National Geographic, far too many questions remain unanswered.*⁷

Larry's comments indicate that an investigation is on-going but this is almost too little, too late. Thirteen years have passed and people's memories of the event are evolving. What would be the goal of such

an investigation? Would it be an effort to debunk it or just to amplify that ET scenario that has already been promoted by so many? Far too often UFOlogists find it easier to promote a mystery than to solve one.

Non-acceptance of any answer

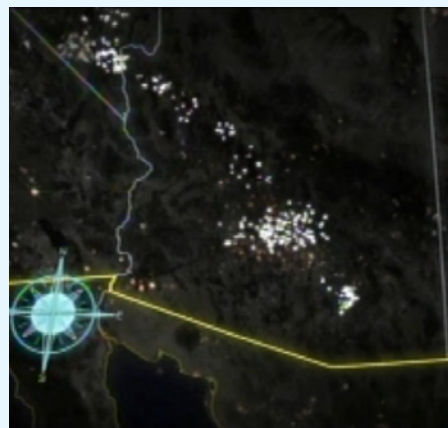
In my thirteen years of following this case, I have come to the conclusion that UFO proponents and witnesses will never accept the possibility that the 8 PM event was, or could be caused by, a formation of aircraft. If I had all the records, including radar data, pilot names, and tail numbers for the aircraft, it still would not be good enough because they are convinced that it was something exotic. They will tell you that they know what they saw! To suggest they saw something mundane instead of exotic is the same thing as telling somebody they did not witness a religious miracle. The power of belief is far too great for them to accept anything other than an alien spaceship.

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Misleading information?

What the data from the NUFORC database reveals is that the recent production on the National Geographic Channel, "American paranormal", grossly misled its audience with a photograph of Arizona depicting where all the UFO reports transpired that night. They stated that the National UFO reporting Center received "hundreds" of reports. Yet, all we have are 47 in the database that deal directly with the 8PM event. Either Davenport does not list the "extra" reports or the show exaggerated the claim. Even more interesting is that only 16 reports dealing directly with the 8PM event were received in 1997!



National Geographic's representation of the NUFORC database of UFO reports for March 13, 1997.



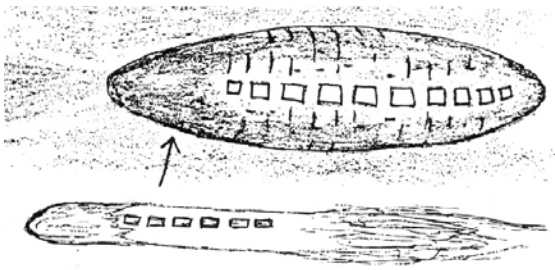
The actual distribution of reports from March 13, 1997. It appears that many of the reports from the northwest part of the state and near Tucson are missing or, perhaps, were exaggerated by the program's producers.

The lessons of Zond IV

During the Condon study, a mass sighting similar to the 1997 Arizona event occurred on March 3, 1968. On that day, the debris from Zond IV re-entered the earth's atmosphere in spectacular fashion between the states of Kentucky and Pennsylvania. Writing for the Condon study, Dr. William Hartmann discussed how people perceived this event after examining the reports they submitted to Bluebook.

It must be emphasized that a majority of the reporters got the basic facts right regarding the event. They reported seeing unidentified lights they had never seen before. A certain percentage of these reports were affected by the observer's interpretation of what they saw. The most interesting and lengthy report was made by a woman, who was in the company of her husband and the mayor of the city. They were outstanding members of their community and would be considered "reliable":

Then—IMPACT!!!—the impact referring to is the impact on my emotions, for with breathtaking suddenness, the "thing" was nearly overhead and seemed to be quite large and close!...It was shaped like a fat cigar, in my estimation. I was impressed that it seemed of considerable size, the size of one of our largest airplane fuselages, or larger...It appeared to have square-shaped windows along the side that was facing us. I remember the urge to count the windows, but other details flashed n view and my curiosity made me jump to other observations. For an instant, I thought I caught a glimpse of a metallic look about the fuselage, and this really made me feel that the "thing" was close! ...It appeared to me that the fuselage was constructed of many pieces of flat sheets of metal-like material with a "riveted together look." It occurred to me that the fuselage was not of the smooth contour. The many "windows" seemed to be lit up from the inside of the fuselage with light that was quite bright...I did not observe anything other than the light in the windows. (It occurred to me that I might see objects or persons, but there was little time for a good look.)...I was impressed with what looked to me like low altitude of the craft at this point of my sighting—I thought, around 1,000 feet or less...I concentrated on the "trail of fiery particles" that seemed to come from the end of the fuselage. I was expecting to see a bright ball of fire close to the fuselage end, but I saw no bright ball of fire. However, I noticed that the trail's intensity did increase somewhat...Upon this observation,



Witness sketches that accompanied the reports below of the Zond IV event (From UFOs: Explained by Philip Klass) and a photograph of the Jules Verne ATV re-entry/breakup (NASA), which is similar to what the witnesses actually saw that night.

I concluded that there must be an outward bulge in the fuselage, especially after taking into account that there were no windows toward the rear end...All too soon, the "thing" was flying away, low over the treetops toward the Northeast. I could see only the "orangish-colored" light of the trail now. Certainly, SOUND would come from this craft!!! The three of us remained quite while looking and listening. I was still expecting to hear noise, but, instead, there remained only silence! The three of us remained quiet for awhile, even after the craft was well out of sight. We were all baffled by that... **All three of us agreed that we had seen something other than any planes we had seen or read about from our Earth. We thought we had seen a "craft of to-secret category from our Earth," or that we had seen a "craft from Outer Space."**¹

Another report from Indiana stated:

The object flew at about tree-top level and was seen very clearly since it was just a few yards away. **All of the observers saw a long jet airplane, looking like a vehicle without wings.** It was on fire both in front and behind. All the observers observed many windows in the UFO. My cousin said, **"If there had been anybody in the UFO near the windows, I would have seen them."**²

There were a few other "exotic" sounding reports in the mix but a majority of the witnesses did not allow their interpretation of what they saw affect their reports. Knowing exactly what all these witnesses saw, Dr. Hartmann made the following observations:

An effect important to the UFO problem is demonstrated by the records: the excited observers who thought they had witnessed a very strange phenomenon produced the most detailed, longest, and most misconceived reports, but those who by virtue of experience most nearly recognized the nature of the phenomenon became the least excited and produced the briefest reports.

The "excitedness effect" has an important bearing on the UFO problem. It is a selection effect by which the least accurate reports are made more prominent (since the observer becomes highly motivated to

make a report), while the most accurate reports may not be recorded.

In summary, we conclude that all of the following factors demonstrably confuse reports of unidentified phenomena and make subsequent investigation difficult:

1. Objects are conceived of in terms of familiar concepts, such as aircraft. This produces misconceptions of distance, speed, shape, etc.
2. At least during the last decade conceptions have been heavily influenced by the "flying saucer" concept in movies, TV, and periodicals. Reports of "saucer-shape," "cigar-shape," and physiological reaction are probably a consequence.
3. Due to the nature of certain cases, certain questions on prepared questionnaires or report forms become ambiguous or meaningless.
4. The "excitedness effect" biases reports toward those containing more exotic conceptions.
5. The "airship effect" causes some observers to conceive of a shape surrounding light sources.⁴

Could it be that the same "interpretations" that were made in the Zond IV event have been made by some of the witnesses in the Arizona event? Look at a few of the "dark object" reports filed in 1997 to NUFORC:

As we stood there watching we were completely flabbergasted because it was going to pass directly over our house. And it did. It passed directly over head maybe a thousand or so feet overhead... it seemed to float over us and it made absolutely no detectable sound at all... As we looked up we could see through the middle of the "V" but each arm seemed to be flat shaped like a ruler, and rather long from the first lead light to the tip lights, maybe a couple of hundred feet or more. It was huge. The kids got a little frightened...⁴

She pointed into the sky and told me to look at these

lights. It was clearly obvious that it was a craft of some sort. We could see the area between the lights which had a triangular shape, was solid and was a different shade (darker) of black than the night sky...⁵

This craft was 3000 ft. off the surface, at least 1 mile in length. There is no doubt in our minds that what we were seeing, was one object. It appeared to be triangular or wedge shaped. Three bright white beams of light up front, and 4-5 solid, non-blinking red lights on east side and rear... It never moved irrationally, nor did it make a sound. It was totally quiet. Our viewing sight was approximately 2 miles from the craft...This craft had no visible means of propulsion and was totally quiet. It never changed course and went straight south towards Tucson, Az. The object was dark and was not big in height, but beyond huge in length. We were back inside by 8:45 in total disbelief of what we had seen.⁶

Do these kinds of reports sound familiar? Can one extend the lessons of Zond IV to the Arizona UFO event? Is it possible that the "airship" and "excitedness" effects could have created the "dark object" reported by some of the witnesses in the NUFORC database? In my opinion, the answers to these questions is an emphatic "Yes"!

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Shortly after last issue was published, James Carlson had sent me an e-mail regarding some of the claims made by Robert Hastings about Walt Figel. There were many individuals complaining to Carlson that he never talked to Figel and, if he had, he would learn that there was more to the story than what Carlson's father told him. What many people did not realize was that Carlson HAD talked to Figel. However, he did not reveal what Figel stated until Figel stated it was all-right to do so. Once he had obtained his permission, Mr. Carlson sent out the following e-mail:

To begin with, Col. Figel does not believe in UFOs and does not believe that they were even remotely associated with the Echo Flight Incident, or any other equipment failures at Malmstrom AFB in 1967 (or any other year, for that matter). In one of his emails to me, he stated conclusively that "I am not a fan of Salas, Hastings, or the whole UFO crowd. I have never seen one and flatly don't believe they exist at all. I just want you to be clear of my position on UFOs. They make good science fiction - nothing more." In a discussion of Robert Salas and James Klotz's book "Faded Giant" and Robert Hastings' book "UFOs and Nukes", Col. Figel states unequivocally that "I have read both of their books. There are many inaccurate statements and events in the books. I have told them both that." Apparently, both authors ignored what Figel told them. In addition, he states that "Oscar Flight NEVER had any problems and Salas was NEVER involved in any of them at all." Now that's a pretty definitive statement to make in light of the categorical importance both authors have previously invested the testimony of Col. Figel with.

More specifically, Col. Walt Figel has definitively agreed with the scenario of events that I have outlined on numerous internet forums, including this one, a scenario that shows exactly how laughable it is to believe that the "report" of a UFO received by Figel and my father could be anything other than a badly wrought joke made by junior enlisted military members in the course of establishing the status of the missiles at the silos they were encamped at. He states that NOBODY ever believed that UFOs were involved in this incident until Robert Salas came forward with his ridiculous and silly science fiction tale of interference from beyond the stars, and that he has told in no uncertain terms this very assessment to both Hastings and Salas. He is also as disgusted as I am and as every other citizen of this country should be at the systematic trashing of reputations these men have engaged in to no purpose whatsoever except to increase the sales of their inaccurate and fictional books -- destroying the reputations and decent memories of men like my father, MAJ (Ret.)

Malmstrom missile shutdown follow-up

Eric D. Carlson, the UFO Officer at Malmstrom AFB -- Lt. Col. Lewis D. Chase -- the Condon Committee UFO investigator Roy Craig, and everybody who was ever involved with the investigation of this singular event in USAF history.

Carlson's revelations set off a fire storm. Robert Hastings pronounced he would call Figel right away and set the record straight. After he had communicated with Figel, he stated that Carlson had misrepresented Figel's position on the matter. Carlson felt that he was being called a liar so he contacted Figel again, which prompted an agitated reply from Figel to Carlson with a duplicate copy sent to Hastings.

I guess you must have posted something somewhere that got Hastings attention He did call and we did speak for a bit, so did Salas. You should know that both calls were very cordial as was ours. However, I think you guys have a pissing contest going that I would rather not get in the middle of. I have no vested or financial interests in UFOs and actually not even a passing interest in them. Guess I am different from most people. But, I could really care less about the subject.

I reasserted that I personally never did see a UFO at any time. I do not personally "believe" that UFOs had anything to do with Echo flight shutting down that year. I repeated that I never heard about an incident at November or Oscar flight and have no knowledge that they ever happened and that I doubted they did. That is obviously a personal opinion as I can not prove the negative. I repeated that Colonel Dick Evans was at the alternate command post at Kilo which is in the same squadron as November and Oscar and he never mentioned anything about a shutdown at either of these two flights. If it did happen, I personally don't know anything about it.

One of their books said I had a personal log - I did not. The only log I ever filled out was the official log that all flights kept and that I do not and never did have a copy of that log. Obviously I can not remember what I wrote that morning.

One of the books says that the flight shut down in "seconds" - that is not an exactly accurate statement. It obviously took some time for your dad and I to run the appropriate checklists and make all the calls that we had to make to the command post and maintenance. We were near the end of the checklist when the second missile shut down and shortly there-

after the rest of them followed suit. That sequence of events took several minutes not seconds, but that is all a very minor point in fact and doesn't change the facts of the overall sequence of events that morning.

I told him that when someone mentioned UFOs, I just laughed it off as a joke and assumed someone was just kidding around. I never took it seriously. I also told them that no one from any UFO office in the Air Force ever interviewed/derieved your dad and/or me and that I do not remember ever signing any papers about anything. In fact, I told them that until he mentioned it, I did not even know there was an office that monitored sightings of "UFOs" in the Air Force.

When your dad and I came topside the next day - no one ever said anything about UFOs and there was no "large gathering" of people on site that morning. There may have been later that afternoon, but I would have no knowledge of that as we were long gone back to the base as usual.

I did not know the targeting office's name or even know that he was there. I did say there was a VRSA recording reporting a "Channel 9 - NO GO" reported. They said that the maintenance crews had no such report at the LF. I told him that I did not know how the system worked at the missile site so that I do not know if that is possible or not.

I have always maintained that I do not personally believe in UFOs. I am not convinced that November or Oscar ever happened. But these are obviously personal opinions and I can not state them as facts or prove them - they are my personal beliefs.

I also believe these statements are accurate. I also believe that is what I said 2 years ago, but I don't have recordings. So my knowledge is very slim and I have no records about anything at all.

In addition, that was 43 years ago and memories fail - especially about things that were not especially important to me at the time. Today, I can't remember what time my wedding was and that I assure you is more important to me then and now. And that was in 1971.

So if this is a help, so be it. But I would rather stay out of any long standing debate about UFOs and leave that to the experts and researchers and those who know or at least truly believe that they know. After all they may be right and proven so some day. As for me, I'll just go my way as a skeptic until proven wrong.

As you can see, I cc'd Hastings so that you both have the same piece of paper. I don't think that there are any inconsistencies in what I said to either of you. If there are, I'm sorry, that is not my intention at all.

Good luck in your pursuits. Stay professional and all will benefit. Regards to your dad, I wish him well. It's been many years.

With that said, I hope that this tug of war is over and the three of you can resolve your differences about the whole affair.

It is clear that Figel did not think there was anything about the Echo Flight shutdown that had to do with UFOs and he must have mentioned that to Hastings and Salas. For some reason, this opinion is omitted or glossed over. Of course, that brings into question the integrity of these reports being published by various individuals. How many have stated they knew of nothing unusual happening at Malmstrom or UFOs were never involved but are never mentioned by Hastings/Salas? We only hear about those that support the story they want to tell.

Instead of addressing the Figel problem, Salas and Hastings are planning a presentation at the National Press Club on September 27th. They have publicly asked for donations to fly various individuals to repeat their stories during the press conference. According to their release, it is "mind boggling" that the government has kept the activities of UFOs around nuclear facilities secret. I think it is "mind boggling" that they can actually say these things with a clear conscience based on what we now know about the incident at Malmstrom.



Based on what we currently know, I think it is very likely that the nuclear weapons of the United States have never been interfered with by any UFOs. Those that think otherwise need to provide better evidence than the rumors and unsubstantiated stories they have presented so far.

BadAlien.org

Barbara Mervine



BadAlien.org is a web site dedicated to the open minded exploration of alien abduction. The focus is not on if aliens have or have not been abducting people. It is on have YOU been abducted or not. It takes a very personal one on one approach to help those that believe or suspect they have been abducted by aliens, figure out what really happened.

For the past 6 years I have been answering questions about UFOs on several "ask an expert" type web sites. The UFO questions are very interesting and I've certainly learned a lot about the history of UFO sightings and what people commonly mistake as an "alien aircraft" (what most people think when a UFO is sighted). There are many cases in which my answer has to be "I don't know, I don't have enough information to reach a conclusion." Often my "best guess" is given, but only as a guess because a sighting without enough information, or biased information (from the passage of time or simply the wish to see an alien UFO rather than a terrestrial UFO), I can't make a definitive decision about what a certain UFO is.

The questions that really interested me the most have been those of alien abductees. The question "have I been abducted by aliens?" was one I at first thought would be impossible to answer.

It seemed very important that I learn how to answer such questions, as many alien abductees are very unhappy people. I always try to use a team of experts when answering any UFO or alien abductee question. I don't think any one person can "know it all". I called upon my team of astronomers, psychologists, therapists and physicians to help me come up with a good answer for the abductee questions I receive. Over the years I refined these answers, finding out what worked and what didn't from the responses from the "abductees" themselves.

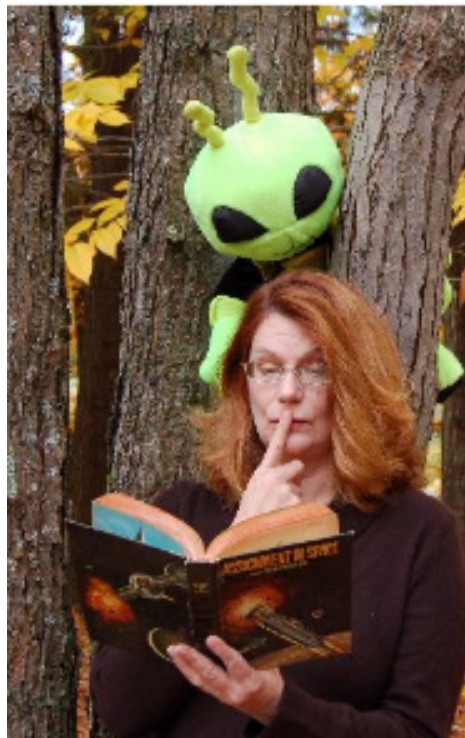
I was at a skeptic meeting when I met Tim Farley. Tim runs the web site "What's the Harm", which really answers the question "What's the harm in...." "Homeopathic medicine", "psychics", "tarot cards"... Tim talked about the success of running his own web site that is "narrow interest". He encouraged me to start a web site not about "Aliens" or "UFOs" or a broad topic. Instead, he said what was needed was a narrow interest web site about something not covered by a broad based web site that will give specific information to a group that needs it. I picked alien abduction for my web site as alleged abductees do not need to hunt through a large web site filled with information to get the basic answers they need to figure out for themselves what's happening. The only other web sites I could find that were just about abductions were full of information that was slanted to convince a person they HAD been abducted. Badalien.org tries to be more balanced, with both skeptic and believers contributing, but certainly with more of a slant toward science and common sense. My years of experience, and with help from several alleged abductees I've come to know, all went into the site.

The point of the site is to give information via links, shared stories, and what I've learned over the years, so that anyone that questions if they have been abducted or not can try to find the answer for themselves. Also, I answer many emails with one on one help for specific cases. The web site is a good starting off point.

A lot of people that feel (or often fear) they have been abducted are very confused and indeed ashamed. They don't want to be thought "weird" or "crazy". What they want are answers. Many peo-

ple only have a vague feeling of missing time or have had some weird realistic dream of aliens and abduction. When these people Google or try to find answers, the only answers they were getting before Badalien was "you are crazy alien abduction isn't real" or "You have been abducted by aliens and it's much worse than you even remember so far." Badalien tries to reassure people that a lot of things besides "aliens" can cause an alien abduction experience. Medical issues, including side effects from common medicines, sleep issues, fantasy prone personality and media influences can all lead to a sense that perhaps one has been abducted. Many alleged abductees tell me they feel great relief that they aren't crazy, and that it was only a side effect (such as the "lucid nightmares" caused by the drug Ambien), or sleep paralysis that caused the very real experience they feel they had.

The response to the web site has been wonderful. While not everyone that goes to the site comes away feeling they have not been abducted by aliens, they do feel they have been treated fairly and the site is balanced. The main problem I have is from skeptics, that have difficulty with a site that gives a voice to alleged abductees and allows the person visiting the site to reach their own conclusion from the information given. What skeptics don't always understand is that another important purpose of the site is to expose them to what an alleged alien abductee is like. Too often skeptics don't



take the time to listen to people with a less than skeptic viewpoint. If you want to be heard as a skeptic, you have to first listen. Badalien.org is a good starting point for skeptics wanting to learn what an alleged abductee is thinking. Part of the site is for "Shared Stories" where abductees can write what their experience is like without anyone posting "well that's plain nuts" after. Skeptics need to know alleged abductees feel their experience is real, and that many of these abductees have had what they feel are truly horrifying experiences.

Also many alleged abductees are happy they are regularly abducted by aliens. They find the experience enriches their lives and makes them feel special. Someone that feels they are "special" because they are abducted by aliens is the hardest to get to be more open minded about other causes for their abduction experience. Since they get something good from the feeling

of abduction, they have no reason to give it up. Still there is a lot to learn from even the more hardened believer. People will believe "weird things" if that gives them a sense of being important and a feeling of being a part of something bigger in this Universe. This can help the average skeptic in understanding the continued belief in aliens, UFOs from outer-space, and abductions despite the lack of hard evidence.

Since setting up the site I've learn how real an abduction experience can be for people. I've learned that when you see an abductee on television, it's almost always the happy fantasy prone person, not the person tormented and driven to a life of hiding and unhappiness by their abduction experience. The wide variety of abduction experiences mimics that of the wide variety of types of UFOs seen in the sky. While most abduction experiences may seem the same if you watch TV, in reality the experiences vary greatly.

For the future, my work with alleged abductees continues. My focus now is on the skeptic and non believer. I want to help push a more tolerant approach to dealing with "believers". Taking the time to listen, taking the time to explore an answer with the "believer" rather than just telling them the answer, simply being a little more patient with a "believer" and knowing that change takes time is a lesson I learned that I'm hoping to pass on to more skeptics and scientists in the future. When I give a talk about aliens and abductees these days my focus is as much on how to talk to a "believer" as it is about aliens.

As for myself, I always try to remain open minded when dealing with an abductee case. Only by starting with a clean slate with each person, can I help them reach a conclusion that will help them. For the person that enjoys abduction experiences, I try to keep an open dialogue. For the person that is unhappy, I try to help them figure out what might really be happening, and the feedback is wonderful in that they are often helped greatly. If anyone thinks they have been abducted by aliens my best advice is to check



WITHIN THE MAGIC CIRCLE

Matthew Graeber



Edward Noa, chairman of the Limerick Township Board of Supervisors, walks past an area of imprints in the wheat field.

While reading the May 2002 edition of *Fate* magazine, I was struck by the viewpoints of Rosemary Ellen Guiley PhD in her "Gateways" article on crop circles; and those of Ms Lucy Pringle in her "The Mind of God" piece on the same phenomenon.

In fact, their stories were so thought provoking and well written that I was compelled to dust off one of my old X-files, in search of a crop circle report that I had investigated way back in 1992 at Limerick, Pa.

When is a crop circle not a circle? (UFO researchers descend on a wheat field to find out)

As Tom Carey (the Mutual UFO Network Section Leader for South-east Pennsylvania) and I entered the wheat field, it was chilly and the sky was grey.

I was thinking about the strange similarities between the UFO legend and the crop circle phenomenon's ever-changing character. Now the small circles of the 1950s and 1960s, which were believed to be UFO landing sites at the time, had grown increasingly larger and extraordinarily complex in design. How formations were starting to pop up all over the planet and how strange sounds were reported to have emanated from them.

I was thinking about the various rumors and theories that had sprung up about the formations and how the circles were thought to be linked to Stonehenge, and their sounds matched up with musical tones; that is, with the exception of the note 'A'. Although I had researched UFO landing reports for more than twenty years, this was to be my first experience with the investigation of a crop circle formation; and, even though Mr Carey and

I hadn't any preconceived notions concerning the circle enigma, we had both read a little about it in the UFO literature and had seen a couple of TV news segments and specials about the phenomenon. Because I resided in Montgomery County and was actually in the vicinity of the affected area just prior to a short-lived but severe storm passing through it, we were on the look out, so to speak, for evidence of a possible wheat fall caused by high winds, and a very heavy down-pour that occurred the evening before the damage was discovered.

My first perception of the field's condition seemed to confirm this suspicion; but we still examined the wheat shafts very closely, searched for scorched, bent or broken shaft samples, and even looked about for evidence of foot trails leading to or from the damaged crops. We performed a radiological survey of the area because it is near a nuclear power plant (only background readings noted) and even tried to imagine how some of the formations might have been made by pranksters with the aid of an implement of some kind. We did this because one particularly large formation looked like an intoxicated person's rendition of a dinosaur, while several others looked as if something had been carelessly dragged or rolled through them.

Investigative considerations

As ufologists, we were fully aware that the crop circle mystery has been tentatively linked to the UFO phenomenon because some of the circular crop formations have appeared in areas where UFO activity had been previously reported. Because of the near time framing and close proximity of both UFO sightings and the discovery of some circular crop depressions, the assumption that UFOs had landed or near-landed in these areas and caused unusual depressions became popular.

Circles and other varieties of suspected UFO landing marks in soil, crops, swamps, and fields of wild grasses have been reported since the early 1950s in the United States and elsewhere in the world with sporadic frequency. Naturally, ufologists wishing to establish some sort of scientific proof regarding the presence of extraterrestrial space craft (either piloted

or remote controlled) in our environment have performed an array of basically non-organic tests of soil and crop depression samplings in an effort to discover what kind of energy source (generally believed to be linked to the UFO's propulsion system) might have produced the flattened, swirled, charred, decayed, or dried up appearance of the affected areas.

With equal tenacity, UFO sceptics and hard-core debunkers have attempted to demonstrate that birds, animals (e.g. deer and hedgehogs), weather, and common organic causes such as fungi (i.e. fairy rings) could produce many of the effects upon soil and crops that the ufologists find so baffling and mysterious.

But the new era of crop circle formations (roughly 1978 to date) had expanded the problem of linking residual evidence of this kind of UFO activity, animals or fungi because the circles have become increasingly larger and/or have taken on the appearance of intelligently executed symbols or designs which in crop circle parlance are called pictograms. Interestingly, these formations often appear with or without the corresponding UFO observations and so-called landing burn marks of the past. Because of these more recent developments, the crop circles should be examined as being either of the generally circular kind (or simple depression-type circles), and further scrutinized as being potentially UFO generated or something that merely coincides with the UFO observations or some other kind of unusual occurrences or atmospheric conditions. In other words, the hypothetical UFOs discussed in this article may be of a plasma vortex variety, some other form of atmospheric or tectonic anomaly or even extraterrestrial space craft.

Moreover, because the crop circles and the UFO phenomenon seem to excite the human imagination in such a way as to induce a great deal of speculation and every kind of fantasy possible, it is little wonder that so many diverse, unusual and outrageous explanations of these mysteries have come to the fore. We also know that absurdity, delusion and mendacity as well as human wants, needs and desires also play a part in the make-up of the rumors that swirl around these events. Therefore, we are obliged to remember that these events are not only

manifested as bits and pieces of physical evidence of some sort, but as human experiences too.

For example, a psychic who came to the site to examine the crop damage informed me that he and his son had a very strong impression that a huge helicopter had landed, or near crash-landed, in the field. He spoke of distinctly seeing (in his mind's eye) a tire and wheel assembly of such an aircraft and that most of its metallic parts were dark green in color (i.e. presumably a military craft).

Although imprints, gouges, holes or tire marks of any kind were not discovered in the crops, it is interesting to note that another individual contacted me by phone a day or two later and described seeing several strange-looking helicopters flying about in another area of Montgomery County. The weird thing about these helicopters was that several (six or seven) men jumped out of them wearing large back-packs of some kind. The packs weren't parachutes because the men seemed to just fly about the helicopters without tumbling earthward. Apparently, parachutes were never deployed by the men during the incident and this aspect of the event seems to have disturbed the witness somewhat.

At face value, if true, this report sounds like some sort of high-tech military training manoeuvre involving the use of the so-called "jet packs" that the Air Force developed about thirty years ago. But it seems highly unlikely that a training exercise involving equipment of this kind would take place over populated civilian areas; that is, if such maneuvers have ever been attempted.

Although there had not been any UFO reports filed prior to the radio/TV news announcements concerning the crop circles found at Limerick Township, several reports were filed with the Pottstown Mercury (a local newspaper) after the fact, placing UFO activity in the general vicinity of the crop damage. Unfortunately, the reporting parties did not identify themselves to the news staff, so there is no way of determining if the reports were genuine or merely the products of over-active imaginations, or commonplace misidentifications of conventional fixed-wing aircraft that may have been

observed flying towards Philadelphia International Airport or the Pottstown Air Facility, which is only about four miles away from the site.

Theories

Speculative avenues of investigation involving theories that crop circles are produced by strong wind vortices, vortex plasmas, magnetic field changes and tectonic events (i.e. plate shifts) possibly taking place beneath the affected areas had been brought to the fore by several researchers. Similar theories have been applied to the study of UFO phenomena over the years and have produced very interesting, but seemingly inconclusive, results.

The problem may be that we are dealing with a variety of causes for the events which we carelessly lump together and call the crop circle phenomenon when, in fact, some of the crop damage may be caused by plasma vortex phenomena or some other kind of unusual or unknown atmospheric anomaly, while still others may be the result of high levels of nitrogen or ammonia-laced fertiliser saturations that may weaken the crops' stalks and cause them to fail when subjected to gusty winds.

Intelligently made

Obviously, the pictograms are intelligently executed and we are, therefore, left with only two possibilities regarding their origin. Either they are man-made pranks or hoaxes; or perhaps they are specifically designed to provoke human interest in them. If they are man-made for some specific reason, we should attempt to determine if that reason is religious, ideological, sociological, psychological, political, or merely competitively and artistically expressive in nature.

In the last case, the crop circles would be closely akin to the graffiti that appear overnight in American cities and may be linked to socioeconomic conditions and the egocentric needs of certain individuals to make their mark upon (or otherwise be noticed by) a seemingly indifferent society.

If the so-called authentic circles and pictograms are not man made, then we

must consider the possibility that they may be extraterrestrially executed (by use of unknown mechanisms) as a form of communication with humankind. Why an alien life form would select fields of crops as a historical contact point rather than using a radio frequency or a daylight landing near some government institution should not be an overly critical consideration because we haven't had any prior experience with contacting alien intelligences and, therefore, could not possibly know what such a creature might consider to be appropriate diplomatic protocol.

Crop circle history

Since UFOs and crop circles have been reported since the Middle Ages and, quite possibly, before Biblical times, we are also left with the rather interesting possibility that we may not discover what generates crop circles at any time in the near future; and, like our ancestors, we will only be able to project our contemporary beliefs, world view (or Weltanschauung) upon these phenomena. This seems to have already taken place since UFOs (i.e. presumed super-technological devices) and crop circles have been tentatively linked by technologically accented means of study and conjecture by formation researchers, ufologists, the popular press, the electronic media, and the motion picture industry.

Legend building - the human factor

These all-too-human factors would be a very interesting area of research for social scientists, folklorists and theologians to explore because it would afford them an opportunity to follow the ongoing legend building (or myth making) propensity of twenty-first century man concerning the UFOs, crop circles and pictograms. What's more, since news of crop formation appearances have compelled large numbers of individuals to visit the sites (indeed, groups of people that appear to exceed the expected number of common curiosity seekers) we are confronted with the distinct possibility that the crop circles are not only interesting to examine, but that they have also become something of a "magic circle" or "numinous place" for people who may be seeking a genuine mystical experience.

In addition to the above considerations, we might also ponder the possibility that the crop circle researchers, too, may be unconsciously affected by their forays into these magic circles; simply because the circles and pictograms, though distinct (as specific forms or designs) are, nevertheless, curiously ambiguous (like a gigantic Rorschach Plate) regarding their origin and possible significance for humankind.

In answer to many researchers' most provocative question: "Are all crop circles merely hoaxes?"

I personally believe that quite a number of them are created by pranksters. But the crop circles' effect upon many individuals in the global community is real enough, and that in itself makes them significant and worthy of further study. Should some of them turn out to be the products of, say, vortex plasmas, perhaps samples taken from the affected crops will tell us something about that phenomenon which will eventually point us in the direction of a new and truly marvellous source of energy.

Unlike reported UFO phenomena which usually leave very little behind in the way of trace (or residual) evidence, the crop circle phenomenon is all evidence that still manages to elude positive identification regarding its cause and purpose. So, instead of just asking what a crop circle is, perhaps we should also be asking why these things are appearing at this particular point in time?

When is a crop circle not a circle?

During a follow-up phone conversation with a crop formation researcher who was also present at the primary Limerick Township site on 26 May 1992 I was informed that "We should not base our concept of what a crop circle should look like upon the preconceived notions of a few self-proclaimed experts from the United Kingdom." (The researcher was obviously responding to circle expert Colin Andrews's assertion that several American investigators were overzealous types who could not distinguish authentic crop formations from damage that was caused by heavy weather.)

The researcher continued, "Crop circles may appear as ill-formed formations too. Indeed, damage which many researchers would not think to examine because it is not aesthetically appealing to our senses and, therefore, provokes little or no interest to us."

Still thinking that a circle should look something like a circle, I asked him, "How would one interpret the chaotic-looking damage found at Limerick Township in comparison to the far more precise circles and pictograms found in the United Kingdom and elsewhere?"

He replied, "The orderly appearance of the formations in Great Britain may be symbolically indicative of that society's collective physical state or condition; while ill-formed and chaotic-looking crop damage may be linked to the psychological, sociological, political and/or economic upheavals of a society in great distress."

I asked, "How could an adverse human or societal condition be manifested as a physical effect upon the Earth's surface and, in particular, upon fields of crops?" He expressed the belief that the Earth and those living upon it are connected in very subtle ways - ways that we cannot even imagine, perceive, or ever hope to scientifically weigh and measure.

He continued, "The Earth, like the human unconscious, speaks to us in terms that are not logical, but symbolic." I quickly asked, "And what is the bottom-line meaning of this kind of Gaian symbolism?" He replied, "Why do you think that archetypal symbols (i.e. circular airborne objects - UFOs) that used to be frequently seen in the skies are now appearing in man's bread basket?" It was food for thought because the number of UFO sightings had dropped off considerably in recent times, while reports of crop circles seemed to be coming in from all over the planet at an ever-increasing rate.

Unimpressed, but curious

Tom and I left the wheat field feeling that what we had observed was not what several other researchers who were present thought that they saw in the crops. Indeed, many of the wheat shafts were kinked and flattened close to the



Mercury Photo by John Strickler

UFO researchers, from left, Mike McClellan, Bruce Rideout, Matt Graeber and Tom Carey look at depressions in a Limerick wheat field in an effort to determine what caused them.

ground, not gently bent over. There were trails leading to and from the damage, even though we had been assured that none existed. More importantly, the formations in Montgomery County looked totally unlike the precise "cookie cutter" circles and pictograms found in England, Australia and Japan.

Still later, when I contacted a couple of circle investigators about the discrepancies I found in published accounts concerning the Montgomery County event, I was informed that the crops at Limerick, Linfield and Royersford were "hit again" and that new samples had revealed that the fields were subjected to some kind of energy (or force) which produced both an angular displacement of the wheat's upper shaft and a splitting of the third or fourth nodes. Unfortunately, no one thought to contact Mr Carey or myself about the additional formations that had mysteriously appeared. So I guess we will have to wait on events before we form an opinion on what might have happened there. But, as things stand right now

(speaking strictly as ufologists), Mr Carey and I are not convinced that crop circles and UFO phenomena are related in any way - except for the fact that the UFO enigma is a sort of magnet that attracts all sorts of other unusual events to it. That is why strange occurrences like cattle mutilations and other mysteries such as the Bermuda Triangle disappearances are believed to be UFO related. But simply because one cannot explain one mystery doesn't mean that we should project it upon another enigma and then assume that we actually know something about either one of them.

In July 1982 Mr Raymond Barnes was walking in the country near Westbury, Wiltshire in south-west England. Suddenly he heard a humming wind and the sound of falling corn. Within three seconds a corn circle had formed in the field beside him and, within the circle, the stalks lay swirled outward from the centre. Despite the flattening, the stems of the corn were not broken or kinked - they had simply bent over just above the

ground.

There have been other eyewitness accounts of crop circles being formed by unusual misty whirlwinds that produced sound and tingling effects upon the observers who were caught in their wake. Unfortunately, the witnesses did not have video recorders with them at the time and could not fully document their experiences. So the investigation of the crop circle phenomenon continues, as does our pursuit for a better understanding of the UFO experience.

Scattered memories

So here it is, ten years later and I'm sitting on the porch writing this essay on my experience with a crop circle incident that still sparks debate over its authenticity. For the circle aficionados there is little doubt that something very unusual occurred on that Memorial Day weekend in Limerick, Pa.; while sceptics and several other circle experts seem to be content with the notion that the Limerick, Linfield and Royersford, Pa. crop falls were caused by a combination of heavy weather and the spindly condition of the crop itself.

I would later learn that a mid-western biologist who had examined samples taken from the sites felt that the wheat shafts had been subjected to some sort of unknown energy force, which caused them to swell and bend at right angles at the junction of their third or fourth nodes. When questioned by sceptics on his findings, the circle expert (who didn't actually have a PhD in biology), refused to share the samples (for a blind study analysis) with other researchers, claiming that "such studies are for amateurs". So, as one crop circle proponent put it, "Those sceptics probably didn't ask him to participate in the study very nicely!"

Over the years, only one researcher has ever asked me for information on the Limerick incident and my brief contacts with other researchers who were present while Tom and I were investigating the matter ended within weeks of the incident. The press seemed to have a ball with the story and the local TV news people played the matter up quite seriously, while also having an obvious tongue-in-cheek attitude toward Tom and me during our on-site interviews.

WILL THE REAL UFO MONSTERS PLEASE STAND UP!

Matthew Graeber

Evening newscasts of the event were followed by off-the-cuff comments like, "Well, fellas, I guess they got away again", and similar gentle jibes. While at the site, a young newswoman shoved a microphone in my face while asking, "So, do you think that this is the big one?" I told her that I didn't know about that, but I would be willing to perform a radio-logical survey of the formation she was broadcasting from moments ago just to see if she was going to glow in the dark a bit later (end of interview!).

In search of . . .

The field was visited by young mothers with their children, older (often infirm) folks, curious college students, retired men with their buddies, a swami and his followers, Township officials, the media, and UFO and crop circle researchers from New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The young policemen who first reported the incident rented a small plane just to fly over the field and photograph the damage. He sent samples taken from all three sites to a researcher to analyze. He would later express his belief that the crop damage was not storm related and enhanced by hoaxing college students.

And so it was that a chilly damp day and a muddy field failed to keep many folks from visiting the site of a crop circle formation that wasn't actually circular, symmetrical in design, or even vaguely artistic looking. During all of this, the farmer's claims that he'd seen crop falls of this kind several times over the years seemed to go unheard and be dismissed as the rantings of a local yokel who simply didn't want to see his crop trampled underfoot. As Tom and I left the field, a bus load of sightseers entered the driveway on the field's edge. Filled with curiosity and anticipation, they peered from the bus's windows, while the farmer just muttered, "Oh, no!" and rolled his eyes.

Perhaps we will never know exactly what happened in that Montgomery County wheat field, or if it was of scientific or historical significance, but a sociological phenomenon of the first magnitude did take place on that day in May.

In this written for 'SUNlite' article we will take a look into the possible connections between UFOs and various reported monster appearances (other than the bulb-headed grays and scaly-skinned reptilians which have become linked with the abduction lore since the late seventies (either by error, intentional design, pure delusional fantasy or, all three!)) However, like all myths and sci-fi flavored folklore the monsters and the saucers they are said to skillfully pilot (with exception of an occasional crash in the New Mexican desert) are mere will-'o-the-wisps, prime examples of dim-witted rumor-mongering and legendary rehashes of titillating tidbits of saucer sensationalism... (i.e., it used to be simply called leg-pulling spoofs!) The problem is some folks tend to take these yarns very seriously and often to heart. Some are more than willing to debate the issue in a heated fashion, thereby, occasionally defending both their personal beliefs and financial interests IF they happen to be saucer experts. As a so-called TURN-COAT UFOLOGIST who has shamelessly gone over to the other side, I AM NOT IN THE SLIGHTEST JEALOUS OF THEIR SUCCESSES - I SIMPLY DETEST UNSUSPECTING FOLKS BEING BAMBOOZLED BY UFOOLOGISTS WHO FEIGN BEING KNOWLEDGEABLE, WELL-INTENTIONED AND SINCERE ABOUT ADVANCING SCIENCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANKIND. I mean, have these so-called experts no shame at all?!

I have learned several very disappointing things about some UFO reports and many experts during my thirty-seven years of chasing saucers 1. Many experts have a PRIMARY OBJECTIVE, and it is to remain the leading expert in their self-appointed field(s) of yarn-spinning. Many also have an investment of time spent in their field to protect. In these endeavors they are very much like career politicians who will distort and omit facts, double-speak and skirt issues in order to advance their agenda. Remember, there is only so much room at the top of the heap in saucerdom and these wary an suspicious fellows and gals will not step down gracefully, Gener-

ally, they pass on from their status slots or, slip into obscurity as some new and exciting phase of UFOlogy takes root in saucerdom (such as the early seventies ancient astronauts craze or, the eighties abduction malaise. 2. Follow up or, embellished details of long-ago resolved UFO reports tend to be total fabrications and distortions of facts. I have experienced such unbridled nonsense first hand with Roswell, Aztec and the Carbondale crash and cover up myths (but, that's a very sad story for another time) In fact, I am so certain of the distortion, lying and fantasy, it caused me to switch sides, abandon long-time friendships and become a pariah in many pro-saucer camps. In short, Virtue is the essential missing ingredient in each slice of saucer pie served up to satisfy the sweet teeth of UFO enthusiasts. However, there are several other missing ingredients, such as genuine science and real objectivity. (BTW, I am not a saucer expert, and seek no following of any kind. I encourage the vigorous pursuit of knowledge through access to all reference sources.) But, always remember being open-minded is not the same thing as being empty-headed

However, there is little to be accomplished with the effort of overcoming 'the will-to-believe', as my dear friend Karl Pflock aptly put it. UFOLOGY as you are aware is a very infectious and persistent malady to combat. Especially, if some of the patients totally reject the western scientific methodologies of critical analysis and applied logic.

We shall not be discussing very much about the dreaded New Jersey Devil sightings which have been re-activated since 1840 and reportedly on-going since 1909 (the year the first Abraham Lincoln pennies were minted), simply because the Jersey Devil appears to be a lone-flyer and homebody who generally stays within the geographical confines of the Garden State, parts of South/Eastern Pennsylvania and Bucks County, Pa. Unlike the horrid Point Pleasant, W.V., Mothman creature, the Devil obviously hasn't

a saucer to ride around in, nor does he team up with other big moths and bring down steel bridges with the resonate beating of gigantic wings! We shall also skip the many mysterious Crop Circle appearances in this article, not because some unknown almond-eyed E.T. creates them like an elusive intergalactic graffiti artist, but, simply because the Circles deserve a thorough skeptical examination in another edition of 'SUNlite. However, it is not just the monsters that scare the bejeebers out of many folks, it is the UFO legend itself - Its dark and foreboding side - its assumed insidious intent toward humankind as espoused by saucer experts of the day (within the pages of their latest books and at lucrative UFO conference gigs, or, with the promotional assistance of ratings hungry cable TV executives). So, if you feel you are ready to brave the unknown... we shall buckle up and venture into monster's lair where few have dared go before and fewer still lived to tell about it.....Eeek!



The dreaded New Jersey Devil:

My personal investigative experience with the Jersey Devil is quite limited and a great deal of detailed information on the loathsome creature appears online at various sites. He kinda resembles (in some illustrations) a bat-winged, emaciated goat or, mule with a long neck and pointed satanic tail, he is said to devour small dogs and chickens, and once caused an entire New Jersey town to arm itself in fear of encountering the beast after the sun had set. It reportedly attacked a trolley car and the transit company had actually placed armed guards aboard its public transportation for awhile. Schools and businesses closed in dread of the monster, and there were reportedly a couple thousand witnesses of the creature over the course of a couple hundred years.

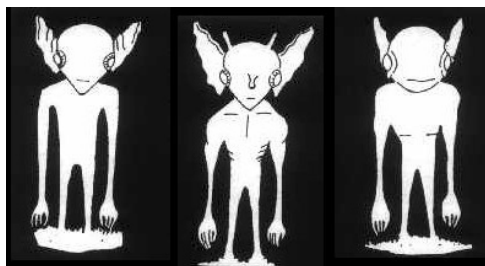
My son and I while driving through New Jersey on a business trip a few years ago, met a young waitress at a restaurant who

told us her uncle and his new bride were buzzed by the low-flying Devil as they rode a motorcycle along Route 42. Later that day, as we briefly stopped to pay a highway toll. I asked a rather large and friendly lady working the toll booth if she had recently seen the Jersey Devil? She quickly glanced into the pines just beyond our auto's lane and replied "Honey, I married him eighteen years ago, so, I get to see him everyday!"

Of course, one might argue all saucer creatures are monsters of sorts, even those assumed to be benevolent, humanoid and spiritually enlightened intelligences - they are, after all, completely alien to human beings, so, their assumed intentions should always be in question as a matter of caution. They have, over the years, appeared in a variety of shapes, forms and sizes. Some with limbs like humans and others were thought to have been robotic devices. In one well-publicized case, robots were said to have treed a terrified man in the woods. Many have also been of rather small stature, while some were called 'giants' (even without heads!) But, to properly discuss the ever-growing pantheon of reported alien creatures (including the so-called UFO Michelin Men) would be a monumental task far exceeding the intention and scope of this brief 'SUNlite' article. However, it should be noted today's Grays, Reptilians and Arian-type space creatures may not be entirely new to UFOlogy, though the dominance of the little Grays seems to be linked to the onset of the popular abduction lore.

Kelly-Hopkinsville UFO and Creatures:

Perhaps this 1955 UFO report from the backwoods of Kentucky gave us the truly frightful essence of monster encounters when the Sutton family shot a couple of space monsters at very close range, heard their scattergun's buckshot and rifle bullet's hit ("like shoot'n in an empty bucket!") Yet, leaving the weird,



four foot tall gliding creatures totally unaffected by the Sutton's good marksman-ship.

The horrific Flatwoods Monster of 1952

However, a wee bit earlier in the annals of saucers with creatures stories, we find the strange tale of the so-called Flatwoods monster of West Virginia. In 1952, three boys observed a glowing and pulsating red sphere of light in the sky. Then, a ten to twelve foot tall creature appeared in the woods, and has since been the subject of much speculation and controversy. Like many other UFO with monster sightings of the fifties and sixties (which were quite frequently reported by youngsters), the reports of an acrid odor accompanying the encounters were occasionally made. In some instances the odor was likened to sulfur and attributed by some religious-minded saucer proponents (like those at the 20th Century UFO bureau of New Jersey) to the presence of Satan himself! The sulfuric odor no longer seems to be part of the UFO lore, nor are the flying Christian crosses and star of David-like saucer sightings of yesteryear.

Anyway, the Flatwoods monster had a glowing red face with bulging eyes, a green body with stubby arms, and seemed to be wearing a flaring skirt-like garment. Oh yes (like 'Ming the Merciless' of Flash Gordon serial fame), the monster also wore a high-backed, spade-shaped upright collar or, its head was spade-



shaped. (this seems to be a contested detail by several Flatwoods monster experts.)

The Flatwoods story is often discussed in two parts by saucer purists, 1. The sighting of the sphere of light, thought to be a flying saucer. 2. The sudden appearance of the monster itself. Some locals refer to the monster as the 'Phantom of Braxton County'. The creature was not reported before or, since 1952, although, parts of West Virginia are said to have been the locale of several harrowing ghost encounters. There is a recently established festival of the 1952 monster encounter which is held annually (as is the case with the popular Roswell saucer crash of 1947, the Aztec, New Mexico crash of 1948 and the celebration of the 1966-'67 Mothman appearances near Point Pleasant, West Virginia.) These tourist and UFO enthusiast attractions are a source of revenue for festival promoters (some UFO experts appearing at the galas) and local businesses catering to the crowds of sensation-seeking mythoholics.



Mothman of Point Pleasant:

"From ghoulies, ghosties, long-legged beasties, and things to go bump in the night, Good Lord delivers us!" – Old Litany

Among the many urban legends to have firmly taken root in the United States during the past half century, the legend of the mysterious and seemingly prophetic Mothman of West Virginia stands alone. I believe the Flatwoods monster was briefly mentioned in several UFO books, numerous flying saucer periodicals and once featured in an illustrated comic book.

However, in the 2002 Hollywood motion picture, the Mothman's fleeting images and story of the creature's prophecies (based on Mr. John Keel's 1975 book) are unlike those of other reported urban legends such as the dripping wet ghost of Midnight Mary at Bucks County, Pennsylvania and the reported encounters with splashing alligators in the sewer system of New York City. For the Mothman encounters are said to have had a pronounced psychic component and perhaps a deadly intent. For it was said to have been the Mothman and a second large Moth-like creature beating their gigantic wings in unison which caused the great Silver Bridge (built in 1928) spanning the Ohio River to collapse killing several dozen drivers, their passengers and holiday shoppers.

Although structural engineers attributed the cause of the collapse to structural fatigue, and pin-pointed the failure to a specific steel component (called an eye-

bar) notably, increased traffic loads since the span was constructed contributed to the disaster and perhaps, the main problem existed in the fact many engineers felt the span was poorly engineered from the start. However, there are those who persistently proclaim it was the Mothman and his accomplice which caused the Silver Bridge disaster.

The many fleeting observations and reported close encounters with the creature do not appear to be similar to other urban legend encounters. For just as there are those who say two winged monsters caused the bridge to collapse, still others believe the creature somehow enabled people (often with glowing hypnotic reflective eyes) to be psychically attuned to the impending disaster. It is even said Mothman had foretold of the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II. The reason why the Mothman should be concerned about the well-being of the Roman Catholic Church leader was apparently not part of the sage prediction, nor was the Pope's much later proposed canonization, or, many other momentous news events which were not mentioned (such as the complete collapse of the Soviet Union which had been prayed for by many of the Pope's faithful followers for years) but then again, it's really quite difficult to know exactly what might interest a moth, other than a bright light bulb!

Interestingly, the above mentioned prophecies and several others were reportedly channeled to Mr. Keel (who is alleged to be an investigative journalist, but is called by some a science fiction writer) Anyway, Mr. Keel claims he learned of the prophecies from several persons who were contactees, and the

psychic warnings reached their peak when the bridge collapsed killing forty-six people on December 15, 1967. For this and several other reasons Mr. Keel's mid-seventies book and the motion picture of 2002 were titled *The Mothman Prophecies*, and the book is considered by many a Fortean classic.

However, it is unclear how the Mothman conversed with the contactees, since early reports indicated he merely squeaked like a large mouse. However, he may have sounded quite sophisticated and charming over the telephone? It is also believed the mere observation of the creature may have triggered the remote viewing capabilities of the people who came into relatively close proximity with him. As you may recall such closeness is considered to be a CE-II and CE-III encounter according to some UFO experts. Add to this, the fact there were several UFO reports in the general vicinity of Point Pleasant around the time of the creatures appearance, and one can easily see why some folks assumed Mothman was a saucer pilot.

At the time of the creature's appearances, news papers, radio and TV news broadcasts had aired the story of the encounters at Point Pleasant nationwide. UFOlogists, paranomalists and cryptozoologists all traveled to the region with the hopes of resolving the numerous sightings. But, like the UFO enigma, the mystery persists and an answer seems to be fading amidst the lingering controversy and rumor mongering. However, bronze plaques memorializing the encounters have appeared at Point Pleasant, along with a life-size aluminum statue of the beast which looks absolutely nothing like the original eyewitness descriptions of the creature. Entire family's attend the annual festival, visit the Mothman museum and dress in colorful monster costumes. Some folks even dress their pet dogs as the Mothman - Yes, there is a kind of Mothmania gripping visitors at Point Pleasant, West Virginia.(UFOlogist Jim Moseley had coined the word 'Mothmania' a number of years ago.)

What Happened!?

Let me tell you a bit about the onset of the legend, the early reports, NOT the prophetic and oftentimes pathetic additions which have embellished the Moth-

man legend since the early seventies.

Apparently, it all started innocently enough when four people (two young married couples) drove out of the Point Pleasant city limits on the eve of November 15, 1966 and observed the seven foot tall monster standing near an abandoned power plant (not very far from the long defunct ammunition dump called the Ol' TNT area) by locals. The Monster was ashen gray in color, had enormous wings and the witnesses were momentarily mesmerized by its large glowing red eyes which one witness described as looking like "bicycle reflectors." The witnesses sped away with the creature flying in pursuit. It never seemed to flap its ten foot wide wings as it and they raced along at speeds approaching 100 miles per hour!

Fortunately, the monster broke off the pursuit, the terrified group then, entered Mason County Court House and reported their harrowing experience to Deputy Sheriff Millard Halstead. Not knowing quite what to make of the strange story, Halstead returned to the Ol' TNT area with the young folks, but, failed to catch a glimpse of the monster. This would not be the deputy's last trip out to the Ol' munitions and abandoned power plant sites in search of the creature.

Interestingly, the initial reports described the creature as looking like a large bird. But, a reporter covering the story dubbed the creature "Mothman" because "Batman" happened to be a very popular TV show at the time..., somehow the name stuck!

Of course, there were some discrepancies in the reports of the winged-beast. But, its enormous reflective eyes, height, wing span and coloration seemed to be consistent. Another encounter with Mothman happened the following day (November 16, 1966) when a group of people drove out near the Ol' TNT area to visit with the Ralph Thomas family. The group consisted of an adult male, two adult women and a small child. As their car pulled up in front of the Thomas residence, one woman reported seeing a big gray thing rise up from the ground near the car. (as if it were lying in the grass.) It was larger than a man she thought, and had huge red eyes. The group momentarily froze in their tracks at the sight of the creature



and one woman reportedly dropped the child she was holding in her arms, after hurriedly picking the child up again, the group raced inside the house and the Thomas Children who were home alone at the time quickly closed and locked the door behind them. Then, police were hurriedly notified by telephone.

According to the witnesses' continuing accounts; Mothman ambled up on the porch and peered through a window at them. By the time local police arrived on the scene, Mothman had completely vanished again.

Artists Illustrations of the Mothman based upon initial eyewitness sketches and oral descriptions, plus a depiction (above) appearing within a 1975 publication about the menacing creature.

According to Mr. Daniel Cohen, author of "Creatures from UFOs", Simon and Schuster New York, N.Y. 1975 "Prior to November 16th, 1966, a number of UFOs had been observed in the Point Pleasant area. In fact, for years there had been a large number of UFO observations reported throughout the state of West Virginia." Yet, Mr. Cohen finds it a bit unusual the Mothman sightings have been speculatively linked to UFOs, since no one actually reported seeing the monster entering (or, exiting) a flying saucer. Mr. Cohen feels people probably just "assumed" Mothman was somehow connected with the UFO sightings because they happened to coincide (both geographically and temporally.) Just as Crop Circle appear-

ances and cattle mutilations also seem to coincide with some reported saucer activity... just as inordinate amounts of fast-food consumption is automatically linked to over weight youngsters who may actually be suffering from a glandular disorder. In other words, jumping to conclusions about anything is not a part of a prudent scientific method.

Moreover, there were other sightings of the monster in 1966 and 1967. In one instance, the creature walked up to a parked auto and pecked on the window. The terrified witnesses had not mentioned if they had the dome light on in their car at the time. In another harrowing auto pursuit, much to the relief of the driver, Mothman landed and stopped chasing the car in order to inspect some sort of road kill lying on the highway.

This led some skeptical investigators to speculate the creature may have actually been a misidentified Sandbill crane. These birds often stand about six feet tall, are light gray in color and have pronounced red patches around their eyes. Had a Sandbill (which is not uncommon to the North/Eastern United States and certainly the state of West Virginia) escaped from a zoo or, its owner (the bird may have been a lost or, abandoned), it could be merely seeking food from the startled witnesses. The answer seemed unclear, but, the Sandbills' also have two very long and powerful legs, they often spring into the air quite suddenly without beating their wings. When observed from the rear, the bird at a distance might be mistaken for a man wearing a light-colored coat. If it had unfurled its large wings, that too may have contributed to the misidentification's strangeness (?)

Indeed, some of the initial witnesses described the monster as having a head with two large reflective eyes, while others felt the eyes were situated within the creature's upper chest area, and it hadn't a head at all! Naturally, many rumors have sprung up about Mothman since the sightings of forty-four years ago. Some are obviously fabrications, while others appear to be distortions of the original reports. Additionally, pecking at an auto's window and interest in road kill might be behaviors typical of a hungry bird (?) But, then again, who knows what odd things a Mothman might find to be of interest?



The monster has even been speculatively linked to other legends of Point Pleasant. Such as the tale about a Shawnee Indian chief's 1774 dying curse on the white settlers of the region after he had been lured to his death by a fork-tongued (Crown loyalist) governor of the colony. Since then, fires and floods at Point Pleasant were thought (by some) to be manifestations of Chief Cornstalk's curse. Now, Mothman is believed (by the superstitious) to be that curse incarnate!

Two More sightings of Mothman:

Thomas Ury and Colleen Carpenter were pursued by the monster as they drove their automobiles. They both said the monster was tall, gray and had gigantic wings. Carpenter described the creature's face as being "horrible, like something straight out of a science fiction movie." Whereas, Ury said he thought "The monster looked something like a man wearing a gray coat." The descriptions were not exceptionally detailed and no one was reportedly injured by the creature (nor counting the unfortunate motorists on the bridge?) and some folks thought the monster to have been a rather large snowy owl well-south of its migratory range. A local farmer had shot and killed such a bird. Other explanations were voiced as well, and it seems some even felt the creature might be a large mutant bird which had ingested chemicals carelessly left behind at the abandoned munitions site.

Mothman in South Eastern Pennsylvania?

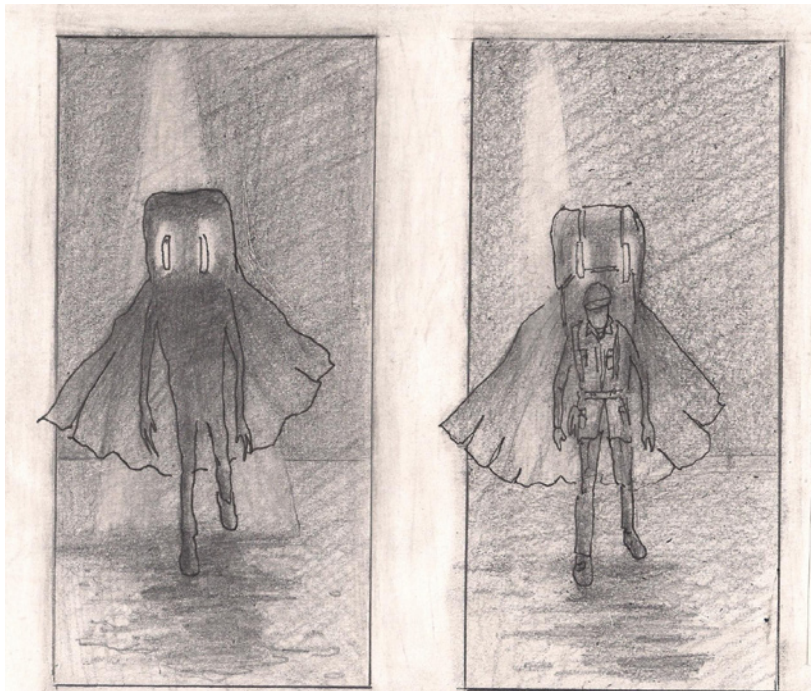
I will now tell you of my personal observation of a Mothman-like monster. Of course, I cannot be certain it was from West Virginia or, if a necklace of mothballs might have spared my daughter and I from harm during our brief encounter (?) But, here is the chilling story for those of you who are not particularly camphor-phobic to ponder.

On a rainy night in August of 1973, my daughter Tina (thirteen years old at the time) was preparing to go to bed when she stepped on a sewing needle which had been unwittingly dropped on shag carpeting in her sister's room. The needle was deeply imbedded in her foot, and although I was able to remove most of it, a piece of the end and pointed tip remained.

I wanted to carry her out to the car and drive straightaway to Darby, Pa where the Mercy Fitzgerald hospital is located, and I realized I had to drive with care as a heavy fog and misty rain had made visibility very poor, it was quite late as well.

At first, Tina seemed uncertain a piece of the needle remained in her foot and she thought her pain was the result of her wound. But, putting the slightest pressure on the foot seemed to confirm my suspicions as I tried to assure her the E.R. doctors would know exactly what to do to help ease her pain. About three hours later, I finally was able to persuade her to leave our home. I really did not know exactly how doctors might handle the situation at the hospital. But, I attempted to assure Tina it would be as painless as possible. (I am uncertain if I was attempting to convince her or, myself) as we started our trek toward the hospital which I thought to be about six or seven miles away.

It was an increasingly foggy night, and a light misty rain coated the windshield as we cautiously motored along. We drove along Woodland Avenue leaving the city limits of Philadelphia heading into Darby, Pa. We did not encounter too much traffic as we cautiously made our way. The misty drizzle continued as I slowly entered Darby with its slippery cobble stoned street and trolley tracks. The fog seemed a bit thicker and visibility was extremely lim-



ited, causing traffic lights to suddenly appear from out of nowhere.

There were few other lights to be seen as most businesses had closed for the evening with the exception of taverns with their neon window signs ablaze. Only the red neon seemed to penetrate the fog. Also seen were the dim white cones of overhead street lamps which glided silently by like buoys in a foggy harbor. Suddenly, in the light of one cone, I saw the movement of a strange figure cast in gray silhouette and perhaps upon the rain-soaked pavement (?) It was large, looked like it had long arms and claw-like hands which almost dragged on the ground. It moved as if lumbering sluggishly along, and appeared to be exceptionally tall. It also had huge translucent wings which unfurled, and for an instant, I thought it might actually take flight. But, most startling was the fact, it hadn't a head! That's when its chest-level eyes suddenly glowed!

We were stopped for a red traffic signal near the tavern as the monster slipped into the fog across the street from us, suddenly reappearing closer to our car as it entered the cone of another light on our side of the street. Tina slid across the seat, grabbed my arm tightly and fearfully asked "Daddy, what is it?" I did not know, but, as I hit the gas, our V-8's engine raced with tires squealing, the creature seemed startled by all the sudden noise. Only

then did I see the monster clearly for a split second.

It was a hiker with his bedroll affixed atop his backpack. He wore a baseball cap, had white reflectors on the tie-down straps of his gear, and he was normal sized in comparison to the large thing we first saw in the mist. He also had a transparent plastic wrap over his gear and covering his body protecting him from the rain. Light gusts of wind made it appear to flutter like huge wings or, a cape.

As we drove off, I saw him slip into the fog again in my rearview mirror, and laughingly told Tina the hiker was nothing to fear. We finally reached the hospital and the needle tip was removed after an x-ray had located it.

Closing thoughts:

As one can see, the UFO monsters have come in a variety of shapes and sizes throughout the many phases of modern-day UFOlogy. Speculation about UFO creatures being present during the 40's, 50's, 60's, biblical days and pre-history have also been voiced - From ancient astronauts to the nightly abduction of earthlings - From little men seen in the New Mexico desert of 1948, to little men piloting mysterious airships at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Generally speaking the creatures were not the monsters of today, kidnapping and experimenting

upon helpless victims, taking their eggs, sperm and fetuses, etc. The darkness and fear of the modern-day saucer monster stories are not created within the human hopes and anticipations of the observers and those who believe in the reality of the UFO phenomenon. Rather, some women fear to drive and walk alone at night, while others dread to pass through areas where saucers have been reportedly sighted. I know this to be the case as I once appeared on a Philadelphia radio talk-show as freighted women phoned in expressing their concerns

Ahh yes, the fear is real enough and it is the assumed saucers that may not be! However, the fear is the by product of modern-day UFO writers who would exploit the ignorance and expectations of others who trust in their objectivity and expertise. Indeed, the monster may lurk within these personalities, NOT in the skies above us! How cavalier is it to inform unsuspecting folks they will be repeatedly kidnapped, medically experimented upon and used like lab rats for alien genetic purposes - as will their children whom they cannot possibly hope to protect from such abuse? What has happened to responsible UFO researching? Why is it that morbid science fiction stories like these are part of contemporary UFOlogy? Why have the major UFO organizations permitted this to happen and embraced use of hypnotic regression... (a very inaccurate technique which is not permissible in any U.S. court of law, let alone a scientific study because of its well-known and clinically proven fallibility?) It's all an illusion, a grand tour-de-farce masquerading as truth! It is the monster within that is the danger, NOT one assumed to be from outer space.

Sources:

'Creatures from UFOs' Daniel Cohen, Simon and Schuster, 1975

'Visitors from space...the Mothman Prophecies' John Keel, 'Panther Publications, 1975

'Mothman myth or monster?' M. J. Graeber, Magonia Supplement No. 46, 2003

More night vision follies

Joe Capp presented us with some more night vision videos taken during the recent UFO conference in Laughlin, Nevada. Ed Grimsley was there and Capp brought his night vision scope with video camera. He linked a few video clips of the UFOs they recorded.

The first UFO traveling northward through Cassiopea was faint and then rapidly brightened just like an iridium satellite flare. Not surprisingly, no time or date was listed preventing identification. However, the videographer was thanking the "UFO" for flashing and called it "brother". Maybe he should have flashed a high-powered spotlight at it.

Then we see more dots of light that look like satellites during a Grimsley viewing session. Ed Grimsley states one is a "craft" of some kind even though all you can see is a point of light. At least the camera was in focus and stable. I could recognize the star patterns. One was Andromeda as I could see the galaxy. The object was moving eastward as one would expect from a satellite. The other area was near Perseus and the double cluster. Since these are nearly circumpolar, it is hard to say if it was moving north or northwest. Based on the comments by the videographer, it was probably north, which is also consistent with a satellite (this is the one Grimsley called a craft). None of the videos indicated to me they were anything other than satellites. Capp seemed to

agree although he felt one was not. He did not state which but my guess it was the one that Grimsley was excited about.

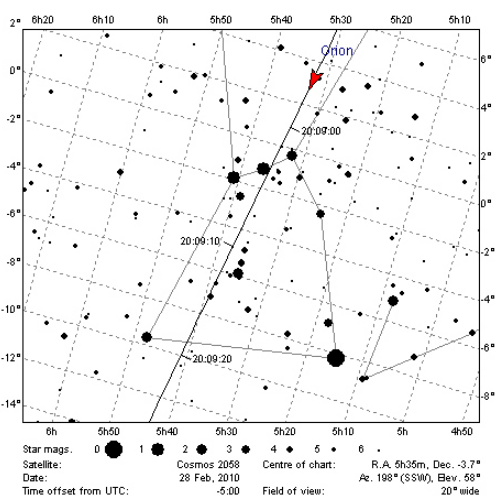
Another individual that appears to be using a night vision device coupled with a camcorder is Jamie Havican in Florida. He posted a video on the web of what he calls a UFO. It is a UFO in that it is "unidentified". Like Capp's video, it is hard to tell what his video shows because we are missing specific times. However, I think I have a good candidate.

Havican states it was shot on the 28th of February from Englewood, Florida. It starts out as a faint object just west of the belt of Orion and heading south. It then brightens dramatically as it entered Lepus. These were all the characteristics of an iridium flare. However, Havican stated on UFO digest, that he consulted with Iridium flare/satellite experts and they stated there were none scheduled that evening. A quick check verified this to be correct. So I began to look at the recording to see if it was a satellite that had caught the sun just right. I had a candidate at 1939, which was Cosmos 1577. While the path was similar, it was not exactly correct. The endpoint was right but the pass near the belt of Orion and Rigel were a little farther west. It is possible that this may have been due to a slightly different location than the one I selected.

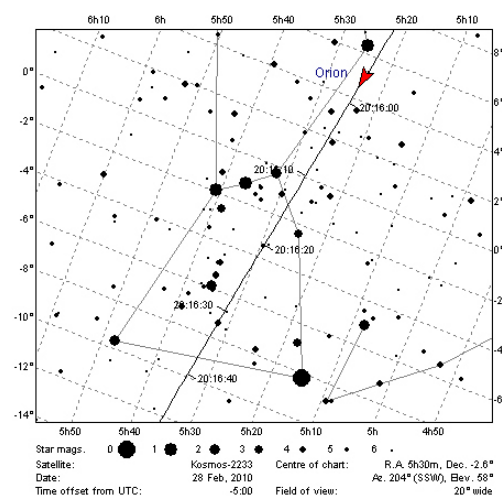
I then discovered that Mr. Havican had a

longer recording of the night in question at <http://vimeo.com/9862716>. He states the recording occurred between 7 and 8PM. However, this recording starts with a satellite pass that I was able to identify as Cosmos 2058 that had made a similar track around 8:09PM. The UFO recording happened after this pass. This means that the Cosmos 1577 was probably not the source and the event recorded must have been shortly after the 8:09PM time frame.

Finding a satellite that fit this path was not easy and I went through several programs to identify the potential source. I thought Iridium 45 might work since it made a pass about the same time as Cosmos 2058. However, it did not flare and I had difficulty at finding some good elements for the time period in question. It may also have been a bit too far west. Eventually, I found that Cosmos 2233 made a pass in the same area of the sky as Cosmos 2058 at 2016. The track was not exactly right but neither was Cosmos 2058. This probably has to do with not using the exact location from which Havican was recording and the age of the orbital elements introducing some errors. Had he given us a time, we might have been able to isolate this one for sure. It looked and behaved like a satellite so there was no reason to suggest it was something extraordinary. The Cosmos 2233 explanation seems reasonable at this point.



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© Chris Peat, 1999

Cosmos 2058 and 2233 passes on 28 February 2010 from Englewood, Florida. Courtesy of Heaven's above web site.

As I stated last issue, times and dates would really help in weeding out the satellites. Until such data is properly recorded, these recordings are little more than a joke. There seems to be no interest in really identifying these objects. I can only conclude that it is just a promotional gimmick to sell DVDs or an effort to justify their belief that UFOs represent something truly extraordinary.

I realize that this is going to be old hat for some but I keep seeing a lot of repeats when it comes to people reporting UFOs. As a result, I wanted to start a column describing various identifiable objects that are often reported as UFOs. It is my desire that those reading this article may go a little farther into researching their satellite UFOs before filing an actual report.

Satellites vary in appearance and brilliance due to many factors. One can go to the "Heaven's above" web site and obtain data for any location in an easy to read format. The web site only reports satellites that will be bright enough to be seen and those with known magnitudes. Sometimes faint satellites catch the sun just right and are much brighter than they are predicted to be. If you have a specific satellite you are interested in, you have to look it up. NASA has J-Pass but that has a more difficult system to work with. If Heaven's above does not include your satellite, J-Pass probably will (assuming you select "ALL" in the options). A final site is Calsky. It is quite good in listing all the satellites making a pass for an evening.



Two satellites in different orbits photographed with the same lens. At the top is USA 144 (arrow) which was listed at an altitude of 3150 km. The exposure time was 30 seconds long and barely recorded the satellite's progress. The bottom image is a Chinese rocket body with an altitude of 800 km. Exposure time was 10 seconds long. The lower orbit had the greater angular speed.

IFO University: Satellites

Orbits and angular speed

Satellites travel in different orbits and, as a result, their angular speeds are going to be different. The higher the satellite, the slower it will move across the sky. Most people are familiar with the International Space Station (ISS) or Space shuttle. However, some satellites in even lower earth orbit practically race across the sky. These are usually short lived satellites and rocket boosters. Satellites in higher orbits practically crawl across the sky at a very leisurely pace. I recall observing one polar satellite around second magnitude that took 15-30 minutes to make it across the sky. Most often, these satellites are not very bright and at the limit of naked eye visibility.

In May 2009, an amateur astronomer and a few others reported a low earth orbit (about 125 km altitude) rocket body (See SUNlite 1-2 p.16) as a UFO. This was the rocket that had launched the TMA capsule that had docked with the International Space Station (ISS). They assumed that because it was moving faster than the ISS (which was in the sky at the time), it was not a satellite. Unfamiliarity with the concept of orbits and angular speeds misled the observers into thinking they had seen something exotic rather than a mundane object in a different orbit.

The ISS and Space Shuttle

The most well known of the satellites is the ISS. It is often very bright and rivals Venus in brilliance. When the shuttle is not docked and nearby, the two can put on quite a show for the casual observer.

In September 2009, the two made a great display for observers (See SUNlite 1-4 p. 7). Despite observers having plenty of information about the pairing of the shuttle and ISS, people still reported them as UFOs. It did not help that the shuttle was dumping waste water at the time. This confused some observers into thinking they were seeing a UFO and not the space shuttle. In one instance, the observer's companion became hysterical about the UFOs and he had to calm her down! .



I have seen satellite and shuttle flybys but these looked too large and traveled too slowly. My girlfriend was genuinely terrified by what she saw and I had to calm her down, which took a while. (MUFON UFO report from Rhode Island on 9/9/2009). They actually saw a shuttle and ISS pass. The same pass imaged from NH on 9/09/2009. Two 30 second exposures taken 30 seconds apart were merged for this image.

Iridium Flares

The Iridium Satellite constellation consists of 66 satellites operating in polar orbits. Their Main Mission Antennae (MMA) can catch the sun's rays and cause a spectacular flash. This produces an "Iridium Flare". Normally, the satellite is not visible and hovers around magnitude +6. However, when the sun strikes them correctly, they can peak at a brilliance as high as -8th magnitude, which is much brighter than the planet Venus. Some people report seeing these flares during the daytime. Even at -8, a daytime flare is a challenge. Iridium flares are brief but the satellite can be seen a few seconds before and after in a good sky. Some UFO reports might refer to them as meteor-like but "too slow" to be a meteor.



An Iridium flare and the milky way from my astronomy club's dark sky site in NH

NOSS

The NOSS (Navy Ocean Surveillance System) triplet is a group of three satellites that operate in a triangular grouping. They are not very bright and it takes a keen eye to see them or they have to catch the sun just right. People, who report these usually have dark skies. However, some have seen them flare up to as bright as Venus, which must have been an alarming sight. Imagine three bright objects moving across the sky in triangular formation. I am sure such an event created some UFO reports. Over the past few years the “triplets” have lost their configuration and they are no longer in the triad formation they once were. They now lag behind each other and make similar tracks across the sky a minute or two apart.

The third generation NOSS satellites now are launched as pairs. I had observed NOSS 3-1 A and C back in July of 2002. They varied between second and fourth magnitude and it took a request from the SEESAT bulletin board to get an ID. At the time they were called USA 160 A and B. It was quite eerie as the two satellites passed across the sky. It gave the impression of one satellite chasing the other!

“Stationary” Satellites

Geosynchronous and Geostationary satellites are similar but not quite the same. Geostationary are satellites orbiting above the Earth’s equator at a speed equal to the Earth’s rotation. Geosynchronous are located in an orbit not quite above the equator. However, they can maintain position over a certain area of the globe because of the nature of their orbit. These kinds of satellites are often too faint to be seen. However, when they catch the sun’s light just right they can appear as a second or third magnitude star. The only way you can determine they are



A Geostationary Satellite I imaged in 2008 using a 200mm lens. The stars are trailing due to the Earth’s rotation but the satellite remained fixed in position. This particular satellite was visible for several minutes at around second magnitude.

not stars is they do not move the way the stars do due to the Earth’s rotation.

I have seen several Geostationary satellites flare up over the years during my astronomy outings. Sometimes they are visible for several minutes and then fade away. I remember one event during the Winter Star Party in 1997, that was visible for a significant period of time and fluctuated between magnitude +2 and +3.

The Ogre and Satellite Glints

Back in the mid-1980s, I read in *Sky and Telescope* about something referred to as the “Aries/Perseus Flasher” or “OGRE (Optical Gamma Ray Emitter)”. It had been reported by veteran meteor observers associated with a Canadian astronomy group. They had observed a bright flash of light near the Pleiades star cluster and began to monitor this area of the sky for several months. After reporting they had seen it several times, *Sky and Telescope* encouraged observers to monitor/photograph the sky. I recall taking images of the area several times especially when the group managed to photograph the object. The reports of the OGRE caught the attention of quite a few astronomers.

Many observers attempted to see the OGRE but were unsuccessful. However, it was noted that flashes of light did not just happen in the region noted and observers had been reporting light flashes in other parts of the sky. Work by Paul Maley identified the source of the light in the photograph as being a “glint” from Cosmos 1400. Maley also determined that Molniya-orbit satellites were the likely source of several of the observations of the OGRE. Normally, they were very faint objects (below 9th magnitude) but, under the right conditions, they could create a bright flash to an observer on the ground. Eventually, Maley positively identified six of the observations as satellite glints. The results of this extensive investigation was published in the September 1st, 1987 edition of the *Astrophysical Journal*. The OGRE had become identified as something mundane.

Satellite glints and satellites that tumble are not uncommon. When the sun hits them just right, they can flare up to a

brightness that makes them noticeable. The lesson here is that just because no satellite pass is listed does not necessarily mean that it is not a satellite. If you need help, there are plenty of resources on the web and satellite observing groups like SEESAT are always willing to lend a hand.

Venting rockets/spacehips

One other item that occasionally pops up in UFO reports are satellite/rocket/spacehip events that involve venting fuel or exploding in orbit. These can be quite spectacular as the satellite/rocket can become a large glowing object that takes on a unique shape that confuses observers. A good example occurred on August 31, 2004. It was widely visible on the east coast of the US at a time of night that favored a large number of observers. Some reported an angel-shaped cloud, while others gave different shapes depending on their interpretation of what they saw. One report in the NUFORC database that caught my eye was a “college professor” in Gulf Breeze, Florida, who was also an “amateur astronomer”. People, who use the label of “amateur astronomer” and file UFO reports without a bit of research do not really qualify as amateur astronomers. I refer to them as sky watchers or novice astronomers. In my opinion, an experienced amateur should attempt to identify his observation before filing a UFO report. Space.com identified this the following day on their web site. Apparently, this “sky watcher” was more interested in filing his UFO report than seeing if it was something that could be explained.

Be thorough in your search

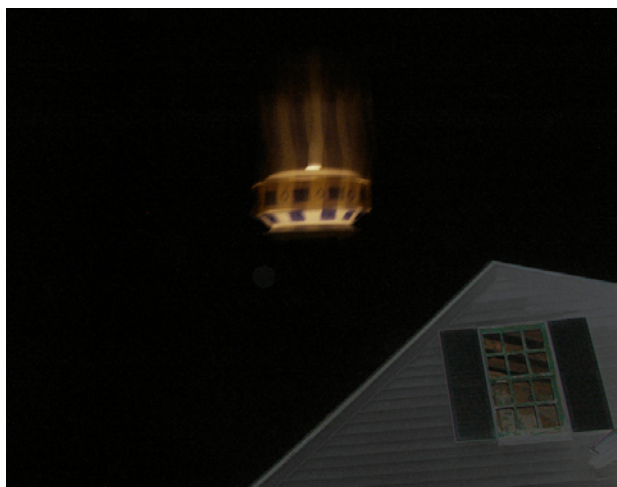
The one thing I have learned about UFO reports that turn out to be an object in orbit is that you have to be diligent in your search. I once was surprised to see a second magnitude satellite make a pass even though it had not been listed on Heaven’s above! Their database had no magnitude listed for it and, as a result, they do not list it in their satellite passes for the night. The general rule of thumb is that if it looks and acts like a satellite, it probably is. Just make sure you take your time to check all the resources and don’t be afraid to ask for help from experienced satellite observers.

So you want to be the next Mr. Ed?

I was surprised to see that the Pensacola Independent News had instructions on how to build a Gulf Breeze UFO model. Fascinated, I obtained the supplies and began my little project. It was not that difficult and the results were fair. I was never an art student and I skimped on some of the materials. I took about 10-15 minutes to create the model. The beauty is not the important thing and I am sure a more able individual would have done better. If I were trying to fool people, I would have taken several days to create a reasonable model that had no flaws.

I could have gone the hard way and do some double exposures with my 35mm camera but I decided to cheat and not waste the film. I also wanted to see the results the same way "Mr. Ed" was able to see them with his Polaroid. So, I used my digital SLR to take two images and then overlay them in Photoshop using a layering technique that mimics double exposures.

It is not the exact same model that Ed used in his charade but it is a reasonable facsimile. With a little more trial and error, I think my results would have been better but I did not want to waste a lot of time on it.



It must have been a slow news period because, for some unknown reason, a gentleman from Euclid, Ohio suddenly began to appear on national TV. What was his claim to fame? He stated he was seeing UFOs regularly every night.

Usually, when somebody says they are seeing lights on a regular basis, I start to think the person is seeing something astronomical in nature. This was my first thought but the stories in the media were lacking in details. No directions or times were given, so it was hard to say what was being seen.

Some skeptics opined that the witness was probably seeing Venus. I always dislike using an explanation without first understanding the event in question. Venus had set by 1940 local time and the witnesses were describing the lights as being visible as late as 9PM. So, the knee-jerk Venus answer did not sit well with me based on the little information that was available. Even Dr. Plait, the bad astronomer, felt Venus was the culprit. However, he also suggested they might be aircraft instead. So, he did not commit himself to one explanation although I am sure proponents will state he did. More information was needed at this point to determine the source of the lights.

After a few days of this, somebody in Ohio's MUFON group decided there was a need for an investigation even though the witness never filed a report with their organization. MUFON investigator, Tom Wertman, went to the area to see if he could spot some of these UFOs. He was partially successful in that he saw a few lights over Lake Erie on the night of the 12th of March. They would come from the north or northwest and then proceed towards the southwest. They then disappeared around a bearing of 290 degrees azimuth. Wertman reported that the original witness indicated these were the lights he was seeing. Poor weather would shut down Wertman's work for the next few days but there was enough information to take a look at what he might have been seeing.

Call me skeptical but after reading Wertman's description, it sounded just like a landing light on an aircraft that was turning from a southeast track towards Cleveland airport in the south. I decided

Is Euclid, Ohio a UFO "hotspot"?



Screen captures of "flight aware" on the 13th of March at 1920 and 1926 local time. Note the approach of the aircraft from Chicago (KORD) into Cleveland in relation to Euclid, Ohio. The azimuth from Euclid to the 1920 position is about 292 degrees, which is consistent with the bearings reported by Wertman.

to monitor "Flight aware" for the times in question. Between 7:15 and 8:00 PM on the 13th, two planes from Chicago and one from San Francisco took this approach into Cleveland.

Wertman's first report on Robert Marsh's site had me concerned. He seemed puzzled by the lights and I was curious if he had even researched the basic flight patterns of aircraft before he arrived. It appeared that Wertman had come to a gunfight armed only with a knife. Now I can happily admit that I was wrong. Wertman came more prepared the next time and set up a two station system that determined the lights were due to aircraft approaching the Cleveland airport. Even more interesting is he used "flight tracking" web sites to determine they were aircraft. I guess Wertman was carrying a gun after all. So, he deserves credit for getting it right and calling this "case closed".

Of course, one has to wonder about the witness. An avid proponent of UFOs stated on the JREF forum that the witness could not mistake aircraft for UFOs because of his response to the events. Additionally, the witness could not mistake aircraft every night. It just seemed unlikely. Well, it appears that it is likely especially when the witness gets to appear on TV and seems to have an active imagination. Wertman noted that the witness had stated an F-16 had passed

over his house. By reporting an F-16 he could have proclaimed the military was investigating UFOs with their aircraft. This is a common theme in all UFO cases. Luckily, Wertman happened to be nearby and stated it was just a private jet. The witness seemed to want to see things that were not there.

Looking back to 2007, we discover another witness had recorded the same types of lights from nearby Eastlake, Ohio. His video made it on to Youtube and in the media as well. Originally, it was considered by some as lights of police cars across the lake or aircraft on approach. Based on Wertman's description of the lights he saw that were aircraft, the video is a very close match. At one point in the video, the lights can be seen heading in the direction of the Cleveland airport! The cameraman quickly panned away from those lights to the more distant ones out over the lake.

This 2007 case appeared on "UFO Hunters" (Alien Contact episode) and the witness indicated he had been contacted by aliens. The show proclaimed the lights could not be aircraft because of the nearby nuclear power plant had a "no-fly" zone around it. Of course, it was never mentioned that the aircraft could have been very distant (see image above) and out of the "no-fly" zone. Is it possible the witness in the most recent case saw this episode of UFO hunters and was convinced by that farce they could not be aircraft?

The response of those reading that the case had been "closed", was most interesting. Ironically, some people felt MUFON was out to "debunk" UFOs! The responses reminded me of the comments made by the NOVA program, UFOs: Are we alone:

Some people when confronted with unfamiliar lights in the sky like this feel the need to find an unusual explanation. For them, science has taken much of the mystery out of life and by concluding that the answer can be found in beings from other worlds, they return an element of mystery to our own world.

Based on those responses, one can suggest that, for some, UFOlogy is a religion and not science.

UFOs on the tube

These past few months did not produce anything new on TV but I did catch a repeat of a show made in 2009 called "Alien intent". Whitley Streiber is the narrator of this short program centered around "John Smith", who claims he was abducted and had an implant.

John Smith claims he has been abducted many times over the years and wants to remain anonymous for several reasons. He starts the show wearing a hoodie, a scarf over his face, and sunglasses. His voice has been altered as well. However, by the time he has his foot operated on, we can see most of his face even though he is wearing a hat and sunglasses. So what was the purpose of the scarf and hoodie if he gets rid of it halfway through the program? We are also told various things about him that can indicate who he is. I am not sure why they bothered with all this hype other than to make him sound mysterious.

Various specialists are brought in to help Mr. Smith. I found it interesting that one of them claimed that doctors were not much help when dealing with the results of an abduction. Are doctors inept in determining if a person has been injured? Do doctors laugh at abductees? I doubt this really happens but it seems to be the impression that this show attempted to present.

Dr. Leir's testing and removal of the implant is interesting. It was in the gentleman's toe. He waved a stud finder, an electromagnetic field meter, and Radio frequency meter over the area and determined it was metallic and transmitting a radio frequency of 17.68658 MHZ. Beyond that, we are not told much more. Was the RF modulated in any way or was it just a carrier signal? What was the range of the signal? Rather than trying to find out more about these characteristics, Dr. Leir decides to remove it.

The removal process was a matter of cutting the man's toe open and ripping out the "device". Unfortunately, the object pretty much crumbled and fell apart. There seemed to be much concern that it may have disappeared. The pieces

ended up being inside the bits of flesh and blood they pulled out. Then Dr. Leir pointed out that after being in the container for some time, the pieces changed. They appeared to be magnetic in nature as they stuck to his tweezers. These "objects" were then sent to a lab for analysis.

The show ended with the big reveal. We were told that the tiny specs were made of Nickel-Iron with similar ratios found in meteorites. We are also told that there was Iridium present and that can only be found in meteorites and the Earth's core. Iridium can be found on the earth but I think what meant was there was a higher level of Iridium than normal. Finally, microscopic examination of the fragments showed, what Dr. Leir called "Carbon nano-tube fibers". The implication is that these fragments are from outer space and were manufactured in some way

The analysis of the implant when it was in his toe seemed amateurish. The RF meter seemed to only go off when it was near the toe. I seriously doubt the implant was transmitting any information to anybody unless they were in his shoe. I am also curious as to why none of the subsequent lab analysis was presented in a scientific or medical journal of some kind. Were the "carbon nano-fibers" verified by independent labs or was it just the one lab that determined this?

Based on what the program stated, I can only assume they had examined meteorite fragments. Why would the aliens manufacture their implant from a meteorite? Obtaining meteorite fragments is not that difficult and the apparent transition of the fragments over time in the container is suspicious. I am also under the impression the radio frequencies ceased after the implant was removed. What prevented these signals being from some portable transmitter nearby? The whole event seems to have been staged and without any independent verification of the characteristics of the implant, it is just as bad as any anecdotal UFO story. Wake me up when an independent lab comes up with the same conclusions and it is presented in a scientific or medical journal.

Book Reviews

Buy it! (No UFO library should do without it)

The war of words - Craig Myers

Mr. Myers offers an outsiders view of the Gulf Breeze saga. Most intriguing is his search for the evidence, which eventually unearthed the infamous model in the Walters attic. Written many years after the fact, Myers reveals the sequence of events that week and Walters reaction when the model was revealed to him. Mr. Ed still has a following but it was the model, which broke the camel's back for many. If you believe Ed, don't bother. If you are interested in the Gulf Breeze saga, it is well worth the money to buy this book.

Borrow it. (Worth checking out of library or borrowing from a friend)

The Gulf Breeze Sightings - Ed and Frances Walters.

After you read Myer's book, read Walters' version of events. Walters tells a wild story. I suggest you borrow this book so you can see some of the pictures. I broke out laughing watching Ed shake his fists at what looked like a cheap model. It just did not look real to me but I am biased. The rest of the photographs are unimpressive. Photo #19 was a critical piece of evidence and led some investigators to conclude these were all double exposures.

Bin it! (Not worth the paper it is written upon - send to recycle bin)

UFO abductions in Gulf Breeze - Ed and Frances Walters

This book starts off where the first book left off and produces more wild claims. Ed produced a few more photographs that he never revealed in his original book. Because the copy I had was a paperback, it is hard to see the photographs clearly. They don't look like much. As expected, Walters likes to hurl the word "debunker" about often. UFOlogy taught him the quickest way to get people on your side is to call all the skeptics and detractors, "debunkers". This book is not worth the few dollars I paid in a used book store.